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THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATING THE SDGS IN UDAIPUR AND REFLECTIONS ON ALFA EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

Celestina Dankwa Agyekum
cagyekum@clarku.edu

THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATING THE SDGS IN UDAIPUR AND REFLECTIONS ON ALFA EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

WRITTEN BY

CELESTINA DANKWA AGYEKUM

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A PRACTITIONER'S REPORT

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts,

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And accepted on the recommendation of

Nigel Brissett, Ed.D, Chief Instructor

ABSTRACT

**THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATING THE SDGS IN UDAIPUR
AND REFLECTIONS ON ALFA EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY**

**WRITTEN BY
CELESTINA DANKWA AGYEKUM**

This paper practitioner's report examines in three parts: the product, the professional and the personal chapters of my internship with ALFA Educational Society in Udaipur, India. ALFA Educational Society expresses its vision of youth led development by being a youth founded organization, youth run and by remaining at the grassroots level, while declining growth of the organization to keep true to its priorities of volunteerism. It is attentive about focusing on a moderate amount of villages it serves to remain effective in its quest for effective and sustainable social change. ALFA is staffed with four males and many volunteers from the village they serve in – Karawara. Three of the staff members are natives of Karawara, the village they primarily began working in and the fourth is a native of Delhi who volunteered with ALFA and declined return to his home state after his three-week service. This paper 1) provides reflections on ALFA's work and its trajectory in development and social change 2) discusses ALFA's capacity and resources to meet their vision and mission statements 3) assesses the role I played as a practitioner, an intern and a foreigner in that setting.

Nigel Brissett, Ed D.
Chief Instructor

David Bell, Ed D.
Associate Professor

ACADEMIC HISTORY

Name in Full: Celestina Dankwa Agyekum   May 2017

Baccalaureate Degree: Elementary Education

Knox College, Galesburg, IL   June 2012

Occupation and Academic Connection since date of Baccalaureate degree:

Clark University IDCE Fellow   2015-2017

    Worcester, Massachusetts

Foundation for Sustainable Development   2016

    Udaipur, India

Clark University IDCE Student Association   2016

    Worcester, Massachusetts

United States Peace Corps   2013-2015

    Burkina Faso

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Introduction

It was September of 2015 when I settled on interning abroad the following year and before I knew it, it was May 2016 and I was waiting in line to check in my bags at the Boston Logan airport. Two days later, I was in Udaipur, India where I was placed with my host family for two months and assigned to serve as an intern with a small non-governmental organization (NGO) by name Alliance for Liberty, Fraternity and Advancement, ALFA. This organization went by the name: ALFA Educational Society and is locally and international known as ALFA. My tasks were both self-initiated as well as assigned to me by the vice president of ALFA, Rahul Dubey. My internship with ALFA lasted two months. During these months, my title and responsibilities changed from a field intern to an administrative intern. I became more involved in identifying the lack of documentation of ALFA's work since its conception and the need to help bridge that gap. From these tasks resulted in two products, which served as a capstone for my summer internship: an institutional report and a proposal on a campaign about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Throughout this paper, I will refer to the tasks as products. I will elaborate on the process leading to these products and how they manifested at the end of the internship. My role as a graduate student and as a Black foreigner will be highlighted in this paper to narrate how my professional engagement the entire summer was affected by the following intersectionality, gender, education status and experience.

The paper will briefly outline ALFA's history that will lead into a section called "The Professional" which discusses the working environment in ALFA Educational Society. In this section, I will narrate my adaptation to their style of work and the challenges faced by me and by ALFA due to difference in age, experience and how our differences cultural practices and beliefs influenced the outcome. Following that is a section titled "The Products" which will give an

illustration on the tangible outcome as an administrative intern and how the processes, "the products," took place throughout the internship. The paper will conclude with a section titled "The Personal" detailing my observations and encounters as an educated single Black and African in Rajasthan, India. At the end of the paper will be an appendix section which gives a detailed version of the Institutional Report.

Synopsis of ALFA Educational Society

ALFA Educational Society has been working officially under this name since December 23, 2006. It mainly works in the Karawara village in the Kherwara Block in Udaipur District. ALFA is a youth founded youth run and youth based small organization. The vision of a youth led sustainable development is evident in their work as they are run by the youth. The staff of four share a special bound of family and friendship which they say allows them to better reach the people, understand their needs and form a personal connection with their participants. With what comes across as authenticity and transparency in their work, there is little room for doubt of the relationship with in work, and that can be felt immediately when you meet them and chat about ALFA. ALFA serves all youth in the District irrespective of their gender, race, religion and caste. Their work continues to grow as the youth who were once receivers become volunteers. However, they mindfully keep the size of the organization small (staff and members included) as to them, growing in number will affect their workmanship and shift their focus from the needs of the people to the management and bureaucracy of what NGOs now are in Udaipur. In other words, they fear their organization will become business orchestrated by monetary donations and funders rather than one which is driven by svraj (self- governance).

Brief Overview Of ALFA:

Vision:

Youth led sustainable community development.

Who we are:

We are a youth based organization focused on the issues of gender, education, peace and harmony.

What we do:

We provide capacity building trainings to develop young leaders and change makers in the community on issues concerning the youth, gender, community conflicts and education.

Where we work:

We currently work in villages in the District of Udaipur.

Who we serve:

We serve the youth regardless their gender, religion, caste and race.

ALFA's current audience: ALFA works within Kherwara block in rural Udaipur and urban part of the district. This area is dominated by tribal people, but also has a strong population of Hindus and Muslims at odds with each other. The Karawara economy relies mainly on farming and labouring.

Area of focus

ALFA's four programs aim to broaden the minds and potential of all citizens of Udaipur District through activities designed for various age groups, with the changing interest of the youth and the society kept in mind. ALFA focus on the below areas:

Peace and Harmony

In ALFA's rural location of Kherwara Block, there is a division between the Muslim, Hindu, and Adivasi populations. Although most of the time these communities live in tolerance, there remains a lack of understanding of different beliefs throughout the community. By forming youth groups, Self Help Groups, SHG groups, forming a coalition, or holding events in which all communities are in attendance, ALFA continuously tries to encourage peaceful conflict resolution.

Education

In Kherwara Block, a cluster of villages in Udaipur district, there is a very low literacy rate in regards to Hindi, English, basic Mathematic skills, government schemes and social issues among the majority of the community. By targeting the children (ages 3-17) of these communities, ALFA hopes to improve literacy from an early age. ALFA's Youth Centre in Bambala village and children's classes in Barodwara village make learning fun for the children and encourage them to stay in school.

Gender Based Violence & Women Empowerment

ALFA has been working for the empowerment of women over the past three years. The first Self Help group (SHG) was formed in 2012 in Bambala village and our program is expanded to 15 villages now with 15 SHGs which has a total reach out of 198 women. SHGs were started and initiated to create an empowering space for women coming from the same socio-economic background where they can gather at one place and discuss the local issues on health, education, local governance, gender discrimination and communalism.

Youth Development

When ALFA began in 2006, the organization's initial focus was purely working with the youth (ages 18-35) in the area on literacy and education, knowledge of government schemes, and capacity building through workshops. By targeting this age group, ALFA's goal is to create young and active change makers throughout the community.

The Products

The initial task assigned to me by ALFA before my arrival in Udaipur was to the assist in Gender Based Violence activities in Karawara, a village where ALFA was founded and home to the founders and staff. Upon my visit to ALFA and Karawara, my perception of the project changed as I noticed due to lack of language skills, time limitations on my part, experience in this field and the great work the India volunteers had done and were doing, my presence was of no benefit to them or myself. As natives of India, the volunteers connected with the locals deeply and spoke to matters they faced with comprehension and no translation – as I needed at all times. Thus, after my first visit to Karawara, I decided to return the following day to the city and focus helping the administration on documentation and proper storage of their work – which posed as a hindrance in their productivity.

The Proposal

"Project Management" was one the three courses I took in the International Development and Social Change program at Clark University before my summer internship. It was a course that taught me how and refreshed my skills on to write a proposal and manage a project. The objective of the course was to prompt students to think deeply about their audience,

funders/donors and the sustainability of the projects. I was able to use the tools I acquired from this course to initiate and complete a proposal for a campaign on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The campaign was planned and implemented that summer. My decision to write this proposal was born out of trying to bridge the gap of lack on documentation in ALFA and other NGOs in the locality. ALFA being an active NGO and well known to do big projects irrespective of their small size needed to have documents which was reflective of their decade's work, progress and growth. Thus, as we began planning the campaign, I observed the lack of formal documentation of our planning and implementation stages and took to bridging this gap by putting ALFA's initiative in the form of a proposal. Similar to writing the institutional report – another product I produced for ALFA which captured its ten years of work, I faced challenges of electricity outages which affected the internet connection and charging of our laptops. In addition to that, the progress of my products was influenced by cultural and religious practices such as prayer times, longer lunch times, celebrations and festivals.

The Proposal

The proposal was written to justify, plan and implement this initiative. This is a guide for planning, implementing and accountability purposes.

Udaipur Youth Initiative on the SDGs

City, Country……………………………………… Udaipur, India

Project Name…………………………………………..Youth & Sustainable Development Goals

Prepared and written by…………………………...…….Celestina Agyekum

Additional information provided by……………...……... ALFA Educational Society

Date……………………………………………........July 2016

Project location.…………………………………….…..Udaipur District

Organization……………………………...………………ALFA Educational Society

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Project Summary

ALFA Educational Society in order to promote, help reach and bring awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, has decided to launch a three-month campaign from August to October 2016. This campaign will be planned and implemented by the youth of Udaipur District, India under the title "The Youth and SDGs"

The Sustainable Development Goals succeed the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs, with the same aim of traversing the gap between developed and developing nations, and between communities within nations. This gap takes numerous forms such as: lack of education or quality in education, poverty, hunger, and challenges in women's health, self-governance and many more. This campaign's goal is to cultivate youth and awareness in the Udaipur District that will work with the government on their communities' development. To reach this goal, ALFA seeks to 1) establish a self-run Youth Council which will liaise between the general youth and the governing bodies in their Districts 2) spread awareness among the young people on the recently announced Sustainable Development Goals 3) promote volunteerism among the youth in the successful implementation of SDGs

Through participatory approach, the youth will have the opportunity to learn, discuss, create and implement sustainable projects applicable to their communities and culture. All facilitators will be trained for three days on how to facilitate, engage and guide the participants during the campaign. The impact and benefit of this project on the participants and communities will include the comprehension of the essential part the youth have and should play in the achievement of the SDGs, their own development, within the community. It will

also challenge the local government to include and pay more attention to the youth and their challenges and work with them on solving the challenges. Lasting impacts of this campaign will be the result of the Youth Council which will be formed at the end of the campaign to further communicate with the local government on the problems within the city and district and how best to resolve them.

Background and Problem Statement

Udaipur is located in the North Western part of India. It sits in the Rajasthan State with a population of over 3.5 million
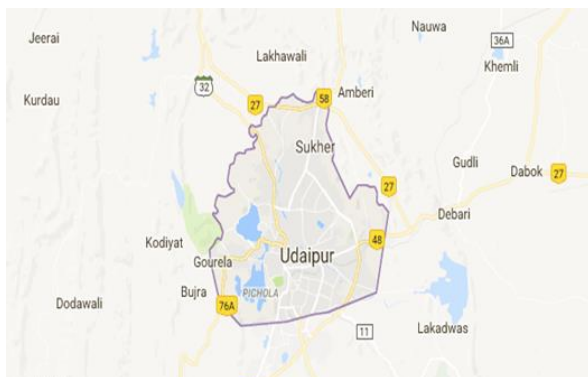
people with the youth bulge claiming more than half the population. At least seventy percent of the population is Hindu and the

remaining thirty percent in population is shared among Muslims, Jains, Christians and others.

Over time, ALFA recognized and understood the immerse potential the youth occupied to change themselves and their communities. Thus, by focusing on the youth and encouraging them to be opinionated and educated, ALFA is not only working on the immediate youth but on the future of Udaipur and India. As the fact remains that India is home to one of the largest and fastest growing youth populations, with over 50% of India's inhabitants aged between 18 and 30 years, Udaipur is no stranger to this growth in this demographic. India is counted among the youngest countries in the world, yet its governing bodies holds leaders who are far from their youth and close in age with policies and laws made decades past. At these governing levels, the youth remain on the outskirts of governing bodies due to lack

of knowledge, confidence, information and avenue to partake in crucial decision making.

The lack of youth participation on various significant levels remains a hindrance to positive change which will impact the lives of the majority of the population.

"Young people must be at the centre of the post 2015 vision for sustainable development to drive the future we want." (Dr. Bbatunde Osotimehin, The Power of 1.8 Billion)

With young people being excluded from the decision making which affects their choices in the short and long term, it is crucial that the youth of Udaipur take an active and continuous partnership with the government in forming and implementing strategies that concur with the sustainable development goals in the process of achieving them. Thus, it should be a collective understanding and agreement from the population that "young

people are in the best position to understand what they and their peers need and are able to ensure implementation in broader networks that are often inaccessible to policymakers." (Irem Tümer, The Power of 1.8 Billion)

The problem remains that the youth population in Udaipur District keeps growing at a fast pace, as is that of the entire nation. Their networks, peer association and common share in understanding of their social issues grows to meet the fast expansion of their population. With lack of resources and the jobs to keep them from frequenting the streets, being married early and doing odd jobs, the most essential

"young people are in the best position to understand what they and their peers need and are able to ensure implementation in broader networks that are often inaccessible to policymakers." Irem Tümer.

population of city, the youth, is taking a path which in the long term economically and socially affects the District and nation.

With this in mind, this campaign at its closure, seeks to create a Youth Council which will be a bridge between the youth of Udaipur District and the governing bodies of the District. The members of the Youth Council will emerge from the participants of the three-month campaign and will thus have in-depth comprehension and tools for sustaining the Youth Council while driving forward its mission of being accountable and owning their future and that of Udaipur District.

Goals and Objectives

This campaign has one central goal and three objectives, with an intentional focus on three SDGs:

Goal 4: Quality Education
Goal 5: Gender Equality
Goal 16: Peace and Justice

Goal

To establish a Youth Council in Udaipur District that will address selected SGDs goals in their local communities in collaboration with their local government.

Objectives

1. To establish a self-run Youth Council which will liaise between the general youth and the governing bodies in their Districts

2. To spread awareness among the young people on the recently announced Sustainable Development Goals

3. To promote volunteerism among the youth for the successful implementation of SDGs

Rationale

The Sustainable Development Goals are the UN's new set of benchmarks to usher the world into another attempt at reducing the imbalance between nations, people and the race to development. The Sustainable Development Goals are represented in 17 benchmarks and 169 targets. These goals and targets were preceded by the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs of 8

goals which ended shortly before the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals. ALFA Educational Society recognizes these goals and targets and seeks to align itself with three of the goals which compliment its vision and mission as a non-for profit organization.

The goal of the campaign is to create a Youth Council in the Udaipur District which will engage the participants in the issues listed above in their local communities. The Youth Council will be a partner in achieving the SDGs and bring to the forefront the tangible challenges their communities are facing to their local and regional governing bodies. The Youth Council will be self-governed by its members of similar age groups. This will in turn increase the involvement of the youth in their own development while engaging and informing them of their local challenges and how best to regulate these difficulties given their resources.

The strategy chosen for this project is that of a participatory approach. In the campaign, the youth will lead the four sessions and engage each other in discussions of their work in development, their aspirations and strategies to combat the challenges their communities and marginalized groups face. This participatory approach is a strategy used to ensure equivalent ownership from the implementers and the participants, and it fosters a positive atmosphere of accountability, feedback and modification of the framework when necessary.

Design and Implementation

To ensure the campaign is well attended with an impact that is sustainable in establishing a Youth Council, the following steps will be carried out:

Sessions

There will be 4 two hour sessions each week of the month which address the

three goals ALFA has chosen to focus on. Thus, there will be twelve sessions between August and October, with November being the month to establish the Youth Council. Each session will be at least two days apart to allow adjustments to future sessions as they surface and to give facilitators time to recuperate.

The four sessions will be repeated at various times in selected department on college and universities campuses in Udaipur District. The four sessions are as follows:

Session 1: Introduction to the campaign and Sustainable Development Goals

Session 2: Goal 4: Quality Education
Session 3: Goal 5: Gender Equality
Session 4: Goal 16: Peace and Justice

The sessions will be organized and carried out both by ALFA, its affiliated local youths and guests who are both knowledgeable about the SDGs and have prior experiences and knowledge of the SGDs. These sessions will be accompanied with activities which add for an impactful campaign with the youth as its facilitators, planners and implementers. These events, activities and sessions will undergo changes in order to remain youth centred; youth run and maintain the atmosphere of youth ownership, participation and accountability. Per review of the team, agreed upon amendments will be made as the campaign unfolds.

The sessions will begin with an introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): the history, the seventeen goals, the three goals ALFA chooses to focus on with a detailed reason for their continuous active involvement in being change starters in their local communities. Each week will build upon the last to summarize the end goal of the entire campaign: establish a Youth Council that

consist of both urban and rural youth in Udaipur District, that will serve as a liaison between their communities and the government on achieving the SDGs. Guest speaks consist of natives of Udaipur and India whose vision and mission align with ALFA that of the SDGs.

Activities

External activities to further strengthen the aim and objectives of this campaign will include friendly games among the youth and street plays on the selected goals for this campaign. Local universities and colleges as well as organizations unaffiliated with these institutions, but passionate about the youth being catalyst to their own change, will be collaborated with and invited to participate in the campaign.

Participants and Facilitators

This campaign will target participants and facilitators from universities, colleges in

Udaipur District through current affliction with departments in the academic institutions. Departments will be contacted in person, through email or via telephone of the sessions.

Team Selection

A team of thirty people all from the Udaipur District will be selected by ALFA based on their experiences in facilitation, knowledge on their SDGs and their work with ALFA. The team will be trained for 3 days in Udaipur by Rahul Dubey, the current Vice President of ALFA. The team will be trained to be responsible for:
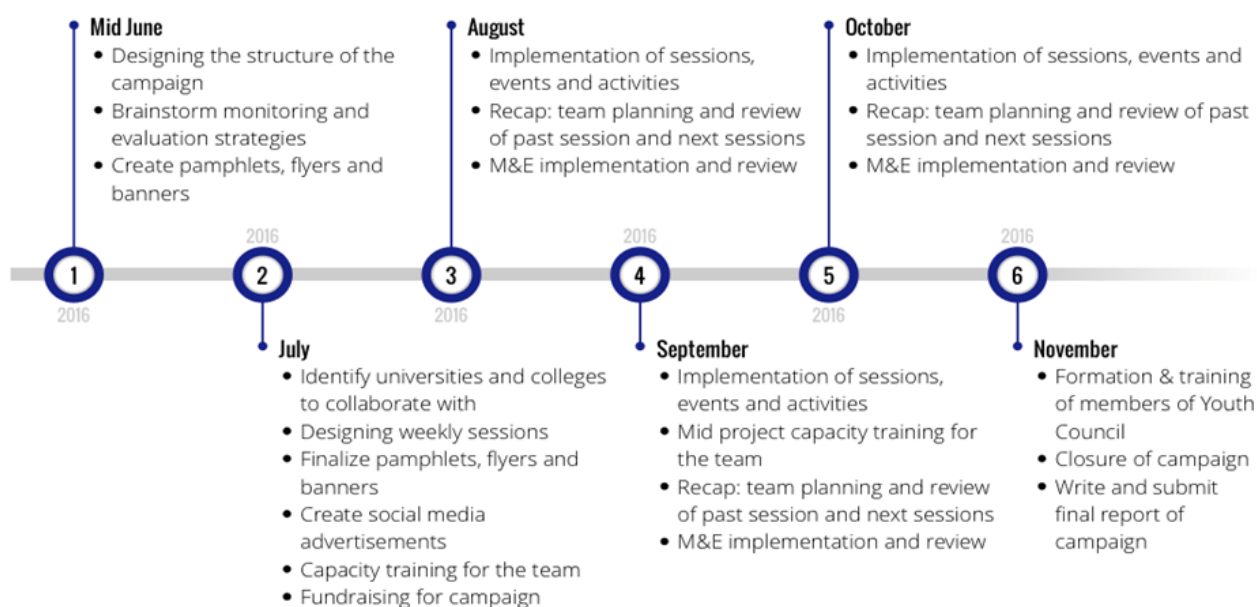
- Liaising between the ALFA and the universities.
- Acquiring permission from the colleges and universities and the targeted departments
- Facilitating the sessions and engaging the participants during the campaign

Schedule

Planning period: June and July of 2016
Implementation periods/ Campaign months: August, September, October and November 2016

Youth & SDGs Campaign 2016 Timeline

Mid June
- Designing the structure of the campaign
- Brainstorm monitoring and evaluation strategies
- Create pamphlets, flyers and banners

August
- Implementation of sessions, events and activities
- Recap: team planning and review of past session and next sessions
- M&E implementation and review

October
- Implementation of sessions, events and activities
- Recap: team planning and review of past session and next sessions
- M&E implementation and review

1 2016
2016

2

3 2016
2016

4 2016

5 2016
2016

6 2016

July
- Identify universities and colleges to collaborate with
- Designing weekly sessions
- Finalize pamphlets, flyers and banners
- Create social media advertisements
- Capacity training for the team
- Fundraising for campaign

September
- Implementation of sessions, events and activities
- Mid project capacity training for the team
- Recap: team planning and review of past session and next sessions
- M&E implementation and review

November
- Formation & training of members of Youth Council
- Closure of campaign
- Write and submit final report of campaign

Impact and Benefit

The primary intended beneficiaries of this project are the youth in Udaipur District. With the awareness of the importance of

This project does not seek to have sessions in all colleges and universities in Udaipur but rather aims to reach majority of

their participation of social change, while keeping the Sustainable Development Goals in mind, the impact in the villages and towns will be seen in the social and political participation.

the youth in Udaipur District through word of mouth, social media and active

involvement of the youth who attend the sessions.

The social impact of the campaign will result in the youth first creating spaces where they are unrestricted to discuss topics about the reality of the challenges they face and the sustainable projects they can plan

forms acknowledgeable by their communities, their governing bodies and each other. The change of attitude and way of thinking will also be apparent among them. This change of attitude will influence their way of thinking, participation within the community decisions, planning and implementation approaches.

The political impact of the campaign will be the youth being more involved in decisions taken on the local government level in their communities. Their attendance to these meetings and their input will slowly become evident, causing gradual change.

and implement in their communities. This discussion will lead the youth putting their conversations into action and testing their theories. In the ripple of these conversations, the benefits will be seen in the form of tangible work from the youth in various

They will begin to put their words into action, demand and create change tantamount to their needs.

The practice this campaign seeks to establish is the participatory approach and a continuous and effective involvement of the youth in their local communities and governing bodies. The Youth Council formed in November after the campaign will build a social framework with the target group – the youth – that will empower other youths in and around Udaipur District to speak and act with intention on the issues that affect their communities

Monitoring and Evaluation

Youth led and self-sustainable monitoring and evaluation committee will be created to ensure a cycle of feedback and modification of the project's framework. This committee will include members of the planning committee as well as interested participants with extra attention paid to the gender equity in the group and representation of voices that represent the various difficulties the youth their communities face. The M&E Committee in the long term will meet bi-monthly or as decided by the group to evaluate past and on-going activities; as well as prepare for future events and projects. A central location for these meetings will be settled upon by the group to ensure all members are able to attend the meetings.

The Monitoring and Evaluation procedures are projected to present M&E activities for the campaign. The project maintains a set of ideologies when addressing monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring

Flexibility: This is an important part of the M&E process given all the stakeholders involved. The diversity of the participants, attendees, planners and implementers, is an incentive to have a variety of means on monitoring and evaluating the project while making amendments. This also means we will pay attention to and include culturally appropriate and gender equality forms of monitoring and evaluations.

Participation: The M&E process will be used to modify the project when necessary. As such, the process will be open to all participants: attendees, planners and implementers to acquire an all-inclusive evaluation and accurate representation of all voices.

Partnership: We will reach a consensus on what will be monitored, how the data is to be collected and who will be in charge. In

order to be respectful of the voices represented during the training and implementation of the project, the collection and analysis of the evaluations and data will be conducted by the locals of India and Udaipur. Formative and summative mediums and at selected intervals of the project.

Evaluation

The three stated objectives will be evaluated as follows, but not limited to such methods. All evaluations will take the form of a formative method rather than summative method as the initiative is ongoing and the impact (change) will take time to mature to be measured:

Proposed evaluation method

- In person **interviews and discussions** of participants and officials in the appropriate local government offices
- **Surveys** will be formatted by the youth participants and ALFA and given to both participants/stakeholders and non-participants/stakeholders

Budget

excluding sessions and events, see below for those budgets. All numbers are in Rupees on the left and converted into USD on the right

Item	Unit Price in Rupees ₹	Unit Price in USD $	Quantity	Total amount in Rupees ₹	Total amount in USD $
Banners	700	10.28	2	1400	20.56
Flyers	40	0.59	60	2400	35.24
Facilitator handbook	0	0	5	0	0
			Total	**₹ 3,800**	**$55.80**

The Budget was in constant change till my departure and thus it was difficult to get a clear idea on how many other services such as room and board for the training and

session will cost. Rahul believed strongly that his relationship with this social group will grant his needs for free and thus could not budget such costs. In other words, in-kind contributions was not regarded as essential to be added to the list, thus an alternative plan was not set in place should his favours fall through. As such, I went with his word and created the above budget with his approval.

The Professional Experiences

The Working Environment

The cultural practices of the Indian staff and volunteers inevitably came first at the work place. As I anticipated, although they were working under Western inspired ways of management and viewpoint, there were cultural practices which transferred into the work place. For example, at least eighty percent of all local shops, NGOs and federal buildings opened after ten o'clock in the morning. Thus, it was usual for all interns and staff of ALFA to arrive at between ten o'clock and ten thirty in the morning; and when it rained the arrival and opening times were pushed to between eleven in the morning and mid-day without a change in closing time – which occurred between nine and ten in the evening because that was standard dinner time. The work place was a place of socialization as much as it was to work. Thus collegial and professional relationships were interchangeable and strengthened with chai tea and long conversations of topics related to work and personal matters. Naps were acceptable so long as it did not conflict with your duties and due dates, and lunch breaks were usually but not always an hour to two hours because we cooked, ate and cleaned up together. This usually affected the productivity level and caused uneasiness among the American interns who had a harder time

understanding the intersection of culture and the work place which is modeled after Western structure and thus they expected it to run as it would in the States. This frustration caused them to sternly suggest and sometimes impose the Western modus operandi at the work place and eventually created an argumentative and unfriendly environment to work in. For instance the American interns argued that starting work at 10:30am and having lunch from 1pm-2pm was unusual and negatively impacted the ALFAs productivity. They proposed and outlined each week's office schedule without consulting their supervisor, Rahul, and demanded the schedule be adhered to. Another change they complained about was cooking. To the Americans taking an hour to cook was extensive and demanded that the Indian interns cook lunch when they wake up in addition to their breakfast which was now to occur between 9am and 10am; in addition to that lunch time was schedule for thirty minutes a day or ate as they work. The forced changes the undergraduate American interns brought to the workplace brought about a negative atmosphere to the workplace which stifled any prior and future relationship between them, me and the host nationals. I recall having to work in the cafes away from the office to avoid the intense atmosphere – to which Rahul understood and permitted; but the undergraduate Americans took immerse offense in and made reports and complaints to my supervisors at ALFA and beyond.

The India interns and Rahul would express their unhappiness, disappointment and frustration with the American interns and asked me to talk to them about the approach. However, after observing their approach and I being targeted as well, it became clear to me that the American interns did not understand their positionality in that space. I noticed that they were unaware that ALFA's working environment was intertwined with their culture and social constructs. Thus there was an understanding within the Indians that its structure was one that was fit for a) the people who run the organization b) the type of tasks assigned and their dues dates in

relation to how the culture functioned on a social, religious and economic level and c) the culture of the people of India – the interns and staff of ALFA. Hence, it was to a foreigner's advantage to first be flexible and adaptive after careful observation without self-interest before suggesting ad in their case -imposing changes. Likewise, because their time there was limited to a period of little over one month, it was crucial to understand their short-term role is to be flexible in participating in ALFA's working environment with respect and feedback delivered in a manner that invited and inspired continuous change.

Adapting to the working style

To adapt is to allow change. To allow change is to learn. To learn is to grow – this became evident as I adapted to their style of professionalism. The difference in structure at ALFA verses other places I have been a part of was apparent. My adaptation to ALFA's working style allowed me the opportunity to be a visual stenographer. By doing so the differences in their methodology and work structure versus that of Westerners were evident. It was clearly seen how culture, values, titles and age influenced this atmosphere and working styles.

Given that the organization was founded by the youth, is run by the youth and is youth based and focused, it was of no coincidence that the youthfulness of ALFA stimulated and shaped the workplace which cultivated an innovative way of outreach, planning and implementation. However, due to this same reason, ALFA faces some challenges in management and delegation of tasks because of the lack of age difference and the collegial relationship they entertained. For example, with the vice-president, being three years younger than me, it could have been easier for me to override what he tasked me with as my other American interns did. In fact, it became a challenge for my supervisor to manage other interns (both American and

Indian) who were relatively around his age and those older. He constantly ran into issues with interns overriding his requests and disrespecting him. His youth, personable character and minimal experience in office management put him in a power struggle mostly with American interns who felt ALFA's office managerial skills were the root of the challenges that summer. There was a constant miscommunication of what progress meant in that context and clash between all parties which resulted in arguments, power struggle, sadness and disappointment.

Challenges

The size of ALFA's staff was not a reflection of the quality of work they did in Udaipur and in India. The passion of the staff of four drove them to commit to their work with or without resources. Rahul's responsibilities grew from a three week volunteer to a full time staff member in the span of 3 years with sporadic income. The promotions to his current position were not gradual which causes him to lead with his ideas and passion unaccompanied by experience in office or people management. His leadership skills were tested during my internship when he was faced with interns who needed constant supervision and direction to help him fulfil his idea for the summer: creating a three-month SDG campaign and creating a self-governed Youth Council at the end. Rahul's ambition was evident however the resources to support his ideas were contingent on activity money from the Western interns which proved problematic because it was not sustainable. Over the course of the summer, he faced challenges in managing the interns, responding satisfactorily to their questions while making sure to play the supervisor role, the role a vice president and the main contact for all donors, partners and funders. Needless to say, ALFA's managerial skills were tested when they had more interns that summer than in the past. Rahul, who was also the only staff member in the city office, was charged with monitoring

the office, the interns and affairs of the village. His managerial skills were greatly challenged due to the magnitude of work the initiative and the time fame in which we had to plan and implement. The high quantity of interns for the small size of the organization and the lack of clarity the interns felt was lacking in his delivery as well as the different working style of ALFA – which was indifferent from other NGOS in Udaipur and from my inquiring – most places in India all resulted in what was a perplexing summer.

Productivity was the objective for the Western interns while for the Indians, the ultimate achievement of the set target was the focus; and with the challenges of electricity, internet connection, malfunctioning technology and slow response from those they worked with including members of ALFA, small achievement were celebrated and served as an encouragement to complete the bigger tasks. Lastly, a challenge ALFA faced was organization, storage and documentation. Due to the many activities and initiatives ALFA was involved with, it was difficult for them to keep the office and their documents organized or updated. The small NGO has no central storage locations on or off line which held all their information. Upon my arrival, I realized the issue of lack of and proper documentation of their work since registration of the NGO. There was no central location to retrieve any information neither was the information accurate nor complete when retrieved. Due to this lack in organization, Rahul remained, once again, the sole contact who was familiar and knowledge about documents and where to locate them – thus without him, there is essentially no ALFA and the organization will fall apart. A prime example of the severity of this problem was when I requested a file on the NGO and was handed an old and somewhat outdated brochure. I asked for a file with all their information and was told there was none, but there were annual reports they which contained snap shots of what they have done, in relation to what specific donors gave money toward. After

inquiry as to why there was not central location to store vital information or a documentation of the NGO and its work, I was responded with silence and short answer of "I have no time." His answer proved to be valid as I observed that he played all the roles ALFA needed: president, vice-president, volunteer, planner, implementer, facilitator, financial advisor and supervisors to name a few. It was indeed a one man-show in the forefront but with a great amount of support in the field – outside office work. As Rahul will say jokingly yet with undeniable truth, "I am ALFA" Without Rahul, ALFA will absolutely struggle to be effective and efficient.

ALFA's challenges continue to grow as they face more visibility in Udaipur and Rajasthan. They have no man-power to fulfil these demands and are careful to be disciplined in what activities to be involved in. They rely on the good gracious of volunteerism, svaraj and their passionate to make a difference in their village and in Udaipur.

The Personal

My role

My assignments and role at ALFA changed significantly from what was I was initially told before my arrival. I was to be a part of Gender Based Violence projects upon my arrival but became involved and initiated documentation and capacity building. This change was inevitable as I realised from my observation that ALFA was behind with the administration management which affected their productivity and quality of work. Thus, I changed my role from a field intern to a technical intern. I worked on a document which captured the decade's work of the organization and with enough persistence, I was able to bring attention to the team the need for a vision statement that was true to their decades work and easy for their participants to remember – which Rahul and I worked on together. I floated through the organization and constantly changed

positions to fit the needs of the organization. Aside from documenting their work, I wrote a proposal for the SDGs campaign were planned together. Although my initiative to do so was out of boredom, I was able to write a proposal and institutional report before leaving India.

My skin in Rajasthan

I expected the colour of my skin to cause people to stare at me – that I was sure about before my trip. I also expected some people to touch my hair with and without permission – and I was ready with reactions and answers. Another expectation I had was to be the only Black and graduate intern among my group – of which I was correct. However, my experiences superseded my expectations when I was verbally confronted due to the colour of my skin the minute I got off the plane in India and throughout my service. I was stared at constantly, rudely and noticeably pointed at with exclamations, laugher and giggles. I occasionally received requests from some who were comfortable enough to ask me to stand as they took a picture of me, while others rushed to take selfies with me when I went outside the house. To say the least I felt like a once in a life time attraction. The potential "money-making" part came about when I visited a historical venue and was constantly asked for "selfies". Later, I began asking for payment if they wanted a picture with me which ended up in laughter from them and straight face from me.

It took little time for me to notice the facial expressions of disgust, shock, fascination and confusion on some faces when I stepped outside the accepting walls of my host family's home. My presence to some was interesting and invited them to talk to me, while for others it seemed to cause them to ridicule and fear me. I recall a lady's face as I walked in the mall. I could feel everyone staring but her stare caused me to turn her way. The look on her face was remarkable as it was as though she has seen something repulsive which warranted her disapproval. I looked

at her as her looked at me till I was out of sight. Her facial expression never changed and it spoke so loudly. I always felt out of place and sometimes unsafe. Each day I stepped out of my host family's home was an experience which never ended without such feelings mentioned above, except when my Mama Ji (host mom) and I went out together – with her I was invisible and I felt free. Although no one acted on their stares, ridicule and thoughts, it was still difficult to enjoy Udaipur as much as I planned to. However, despite my melancholy experiences outside my host family's house, my interaction at home was quite the opposite. My host family identified themselves as Black and could not understand why other Indians did not see themselves that way (not White) and looked weirdly at me. To them we were all Black and the colour of my skin was no reason to relate to me any differently than they would a White person or a fellow Indian – with lighter skin than mine I should add.

I was welcomed to the family with a warm dinner and Mama Ji sitting in front of me and watching me as I ate with a smile on her face; "more roti"?, she would ask and then add to my plate anyway – that is my first memory of my host mum, and certainly not the last. Although the host family welcomed me with an open heart, I came to understand that most of the Black interns were placed with that host family due to a history of a Black intern and their host family and being denied entry into a house they were visiting with a White intern. This story was validated when I noticed pictures of former black students in the living room and stories I heard from trusted sources which implicates the Udaipur program and the larger American Institution for not paying attention to these issues; and even when I brought it to their attention on different occasions it was a battle with them. When I asked the program coordinator about racism in the program, Udaipur and India, she denied any incidence of racism and argued with me about my experiences and about racism in Udaipur in general. To her, having a Black intern in the program

did not mean that intern will have a different experience from White interns – and it was certainly not enough reason to warrant an in-depth diversity session during orientation which prepared her team, the White interns, the Black interns and the host family the duration of their stay. Our conversations became frustrating when I was beginning to justify my experience as a Black woman in Udaipur, India and how different it is for my fellow White colleagues. After another intense conversation with the program coordinator, I let the pieces lay when they fell and leaned on my host family for support, comfort and acceptance.

What I came back with

My two months in India was more than an internship. It was a combination of ubiquitous self-realization, self-interrogation, silent racial conversations with myself and others, growth and above all, confirmation. I realized that my host family and I had an ethnic background in common – where my Ghanaian and African ways lined up perfectly with theirs (i.e. how we cook, what we cooked, how we ate, how we dressed, fabric, patterns and colours we were attracted to, our ideas of discipline and translation of love/affection etc.) Ethnically we connected and I understood their actions which I cannot put into words but "I get it". It was strange because it was my host mum and I's unspoken language which drew us closer and faster together as friends. Our culture on the other hand was very different. They were Hindu and Muslim but had a cross of Jesus in the house. They respected my religion and I respected theirs. Their customs and cultural practices where different from what I grew up with but certainly not unusual to me because I was pre-exposed to such knowledge through travel, books, media and my own cultural curiosity. This realization led me to truly understand that all cultures are intersected and not

drastically different from each other as we may think. Our differences are our similarities spoke in a different language and country.

A confirmation about myself was that I have grown to be more flexible and adaptive than I thought. My mentality shifted from a "way of doing things" to a "different route, same goal" way of thinking. I worried not at all about how ALFA achieved their goals because they had many factors that worked against them (inconstant electricity and internet, power outage, minimum funds or lack thereof, technology challenges, cultural obligations which tramp work); thus, when they achieve a small part of their big goal, it was to me and them a milestone. My eye for detail and quality of work however did not learn flexibility but the opposite. I noticed I still expected more from ALFA and my host siblings at all times because, to me, there is always a way if you want one; hence, having less did not mean producing mediocre work.

Lastly, I learned about silent leadership. I found that without many words I am able to command a room when I needed to. My patience seems to have grown along with my tolerance but not with my compensation. I learned what I will compromise and what I was stern on because it would be a career and/or personal suicide should I give it permission and power. I became confident in Blackness, African-ness and Femininity. I was able to tolerate the fracas that summer by being patience with my reactions and communication – or lack thereof. I compromised on where to go, what to do so and how long to stay outside so I am home safely and still sane. However, I did not reward negative and intimidating behaviours and did so in a manner that removed me from that situation and gave me more autonomy in how I was learning, growing and working in that atmosphere.

Conclusion

This report covered three sections of my internship with ALFA Educational Society in Udaipur, India: the product, the professional and the personal, with a detailed description of ALFA can be found in appendix section. My products were a proposal for ALFA's SDG campaign and an institutional report covering ALFA's decade of work since its inception. This section was followed by a professional detail of my internship with some reflections of the Udaipur culture and how that influences the work place and responsibilities. This paper was concluded by the personal section where my skin colour, my intersectionality played important parts in shaping my two months stay in Rajasthan.

APPENDIX

Alliance for Liberty, Fraternity and Advancement (ALFA)

Registered name: ALFA Educational Society

Founded on: December 23, 2006

Address: Village-Karawara, Tehsil-Kherwara, District Udaipur, Rajasthan, India 313804

Telephone: +91 096 49 544234

Website: www.alfasociety.org

Email: alfasociety@gmail.com

Vision: Youth led sustainable community development

Who we are: We are a youth based organization focused on the issues of gender, education, peace and harmony.

What we do: We provide capacity building trainings to develop young leaders and change makers in the community on issues

concerning the youth, gender, community conflicts and education.

Where we work: We currently work in villages in the District of Udaipur.

Who we serve: We serve the youth regardless their gender, religion, caste and race.

ALFA's current audience: ALFA works within Kherwara block in rural Udaipur and urban part of the district. This area is dominated by tribal people, but also has a strong constituency of Hindus and Muslims at odds with each other. The Karawara economy relies mainly on farming and labouring.

Objectives of ALFA

- To break down cultural barriers and create religious, social, and political unity in Kherwara Block
- To broaden the minds of the community through education and facilitate leadership among the youth

- To facilitate active participation in the local Panchayat Block
- To educate and sensitize community members about gender-based violence
- To create active and thoughtful youth citizens in the community

Strategies of ALFA

- Survey and understand the surrounding rural community to accurately assess the needs and areas where ALFA can be of most help.
- Plan long-term projects surrounding an important social issue and devote manpower to holistically understand the problem, analyse the data collected, and come up with a solution that best fits the community.
- Arrange workshops to discuss and study the problems faced by the individuals and communities. These issues concerning youth

development, gender, health, and governance.

- Find and work with passionate and motivated volunteers with strong language and leadership skills to facilitate our strategies and provide input towards the growth of the organization.

The Staff

Lokesh Kalal, (Founder) started the work of Alfa in 2005 with lifelong friend Jahid Makrani. In 2006 he worked actively with his village and decided to undergo the registration process to make Alfa Educational Society official. Lokesh previously worked with Seva Mandir where he gained most of his knowledge on the operations of a successful and sustainable NGO. Lokesh is an active participant in his community Panchayat and has implemented many successful activities in the name of Alfa in Karawara community. Lokesh prides himself as a man of values. These values

include accountability, responsibility and always having an open mind to sensitive issues. His main concern is the Karawara youth and how they can impact the communal relations as they become the adults of the village.

Rahul Dubey: A very young dynamic, passionate and motivated addition to the team. Rahul joined ALFA 2012 as a volunteer and stayed on after his service. He is currently the Vice President of ALFA and continues to play an active role both in the rural and urban sites. He has a great sense of humour and one should definitely meet him if you are in and around Udaipur. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from University of Delhi and a post graduation in Social Work. He loves travelling, singing, interacting with people and understanding the cultural differences and perspectives.

Mohan Ahari: Mohan comes from the neighbouring village where ALFA is based. He dedicates towards encouraging and ensuring the participation of tribal youth in the local governance, tribal rights, ae well as managing a Youth Centre in his community. He believes that education can really change the world and has motivated many young people in his village to continue their education and go for the higher studies. Mohan has a three-year experience for working in the social sector. He as a passion of working for young people and remains a role model for his village and other villages he encounters. He had worked for around three years now in the social sector and has a passion of working for young people. He is always willing to learn from other people and is focused on issues and challenges related to tribal society. He loves reading newspaper and interacting with people coming from different cultures.

Naresh Bodat: Naresh joined ALFA in 2012 and holds the most experience organization. He has been associated with different NGOs in the past where he gained a tremendous experience from working with young people. He is currently working in ALFA as a Program and Field Coordinator where he is responsible for looking after the program on Youth Development and related activities. He one of the best community field workers in ALFA and everyone in the organization loves to interact with him to gain and learn about the village culture, problems and challenges. Naresh loves listening to music and likes to spend his free time talking to the community members.

Overview

ALFA Educational Society has been working in the Kherwara Block of Udaipur District in the Southern part of Rajasthan since its inception in 2006. The Block is comprised of largely tribal people (a group of people who live in tribes and belong to

the lower caste in the community) with Hindu and Muslim communities also well represented. Due to the difference in beliefs, traditions and practices the groups who occupy this area remain disparate – both ideologically and spatially. Conflict within and between communities remains common and perpetuate with the lack of and difficulty in gaining understanding of either group. In addition to this, in recent years the area has witnessed mass migration of its youth to nearby cities in an attempt to escape a life of working in the field. Motivated by these factors, ALFA aims to work with young people on the issues youth development, peace and harmony, education, gender based violence and women's empowerment.

Over the years, ALFA has developed a positive reputation within the community through its work on the above mentioned issues with a purely community centred and

human-rights based view of development. All of these initiatives work together for ALFA's overall goal of broadening the minds and potential of all citizens of Udaipur District.

The organization's idea of Sanjha Manch, or common space, encourages thoughts and opinions of all people in a safe area with no judgment. The simple idea of coming together with no thought of caste or religious exclusion fosters courage in the community and is meant to empower the people to form their own ideas and act on them. ALFA's local origins have also allowed the organization to understand the problems and needs of the community much more holistically than an NGO unfamiliar to the area.

Area of focus

ALFA's four program aims to broaden the minds and potential of all citizens of Udaipur District through

activities designed for various age groups, with the changing interest of the youth and the society kept in mind. ALFA focus on the below areas:

Peace and Harmony

ALFA through its continuous efforts has expanded its work and project to the neighbouring villages of Kherwara Block and urban Udaipur

In ALFA's rural location of Kherwara Block, there is a division between the Muslim, Hindu, and Adivasi populations. Although most of the time these communities live in tolerance, there remains a lack of understanding of different beliefs throughout the community. By forming youth groups, Self Help Groups, SHG groups, forming a coalition, or holding events in which all communities are in attendance, ALFA continuously tries to encourage peaceful conflict resolution. With the 2002 Gujarat genocide in mind, ALFA believes this initiative is of utmost importance. This sector of ALFA's mission is not specific to any one demographic as it is important throughout the entire community in all ages and genders.

Continuous activities within Peace and Harmony

Maitri Cricket Cup Tournament: Annually ALFA hosts a tournament which all people can agree with: cricket! People of all beliefs and castes come together for the love of sport and bond over common interests.

Workshops on Peace and Conflict

Resolution:

ALFA filmy believes in the need for communities, within Udaipur District, to set aside preconceptions of others within their community and focus on community development to re-establish peace. Using workshops ALFA aims to facilitate understanding of other cultures within the community. Moreover, the use of the three day workshops helps to build the capacities of the youth to become advocates of peace in their communities. They learn about the

differences in culture and religion, communal politics, gender and communalism, and how all of this leads to violence. ALFA conducts four Peace and Conflict Resolution workshops annually to build the capacities of youth and develop peace makers in the community.

Film Screenings and Discussions

ALFA conducts film screenings on various issues including peace and harmony. The films are always followed by a discussion. The screening of films and documentaries help the participants to understand and connect the issues within their local community.

Community Peace Centre Udaipur:

Community Peace Centre Udaipur is an initiative of ALFA Educational Society, to bring together the young people coming from different caste and religious backgrounds and to support them in facilitating a dialogue and cooperation. The centre aims at bringing the target youth participants from different parts of Udaipur district. The centre involves discussion with all youth participants which helps them in going through an experiential learning process; develop their understanding on the dialogue and conflict transformation, cultural differences and perspectives. The centre focuses on the possibilities of living and learning together through various different interactive activities. All activities are by the discussion, study circle, group discussions, games, workshops and training.

Diversity walk

The Diversity walk is a regular activity which is conducted with youth participants coming from different religions and castes. The motivation behind the walk is to have cultural exchange between different community members and to understand cultural differences and perspectives. In this walk, all participants visit Dargah and Temple to understand the

religious styles of Hindu and Muslim communities followed by a conversation on what they experienced. The discussion helps in understanding on the current reasons/challenges of growing gap between Hindu and Muslim youth and what could be the possible solutions to address those challenges. During the discussion, the youth share that communication remains a hindrance in the bridging of the two religions and thus creates a larger disparity between them and others outside their circle. This walk is helping in increasing the participation of all different community members and aims at creating peaceful and inclusive societies.

Education

In January 2013, with the help and dedication of long-term volunteers in neighbouring villages, ALFA was able to open the Bambala Youth Centre for children and youth. They organized a board of men and women to make decisions on behalf of the community to ensure maximum reach and usage among the village. Children ranging from ages 3-18 frequent the centre as a way to learn Math, English, Science, about Computers, Governance, and overall personality development from the ALFA interns. Many Adivasi youths are not able to reliably attend school because of household obligations and financial distress, so the youth centre is a necessity in the lives of the village children. Interns have recently started the Udaan "Fly" Project for Adivasi children in Kherwara Block.

Many children have great potential for educational success, but no finances set aside for their stationery needs in order to learn. This discourages children from attending school as they are unable to take notes, and the pressure from their families to help with housework overwhelms them. The Udaan Project simply focuses on fundraising

throughout the community to buy basic necessities for these children in need. This particularly focuses on providing quality education and ensures that no one is left behind.

In Kherwara Block, a cluster of villages in Udaipur district, there is a very low literacy rate in regards to Hindi, English, basic Mathematic skills, government schemes and social issues among the majority of the community. By targeting the children (ages 3-17) of these communities, ALFA hopes to improve literacy from an early age. ALFA's Youth Centre in Bambala village and children's classes in Barodwara village make learning fun for the children and encourage them to stay in school. Many girls in the village leave school to work at home by class 8 and children of both genders find it difficult to balance school and their home duties and an ongoing problem in rural communities. The staff and volunteers of ALFA are always

working to involve and capture the attention of these children to spark their interests about their education. With two villages in progress, ALFA is looking to expand their classes to all of Kherwara Block.

Activities within Child Education

Youth Centres: In Bambala village and soon to be Barodwara, ALFA's Youth Resource Centre is an open space for children to come learn Math, English, Hindi, Governance, and collaborate with one another for their overall personality development. With in-kind sponsorship, ALFA is also able to distribute the basic necessities students need to help in the learning process.

Heath Assessment and Education

Our partners and friends from Taiwan visit ALFA annually to perform basic health assessments on children in the Kherwara villages. They provide classes emphasizing the importance of personal hygiene and taking care of your teeth and body, while

handing out the necessary tools like toothbrushes.

Current programs and activities

Language classes: At one of the youth resource centres of ALFA in the Ghati village, local young volunteers of the organization are conducting Hindi and English classes on the regular basis. In total, 55 students including children and young people are currently enrolled in these classes. The classes include interactive style of teaching through different games and activities which focuses on the qualitative education. The students follow learning by doing approach. The classes had left a huge impact on the community as it has changed the mentality of the parents and the community members and have understood and realized the importance of education. The classes provide equal opportunity to both, boys and girls of the community and surprisingly, in this language program there

are more girls enrolled than boys. It is also seen through different observations by the staff members of the organization that the attendance rate of girls is higher than that of boys. Also, local young volunteers through this program are engaged indirectly with parents convincing them to send their girl child to the Youth Resource Centre and participate in the language classes. The language program has been going amazingly well and the organization will be expanding it to other Youth Resource Centres in the future.

Computer Literacy Program

This was started by 3 young people at our Youth Resource Centre in Karawara village. These youths received a one-month training in the Microsoft Office, basic computer skills and other internet applications. In total, they ran two batches in which a total of 30 youth are attending the classes regularly. The classes involve students from

different communities with different caste and religion, interests and backgrounds. This program is not only helping students get a working knowledge of computers but is also creating a platform for the young people to gather at one place where they can freely share their opinions and thoughts. The classes are going very well as it involves a lot of interaction between the participants and it helps in developing relationships with each other. The classes are currently going on at only one centre but ALFA is looking forward to expand this program at other two Youth Resource Centres in order to reach out to more young members of the community.

Gender Based Violence & Women Empowerment

Gender equality is another issue the Indian community is continuously struggle with. And like with the youth, and children of the Kherwara villages, ALFA believes the women in these communities should have the same opportunities and voice as their children and husbands. Along with the multiple Self-Help Groups (SHGs) that have been established among Hindu, Muslim, and Adivasi women, ALFA has also held activities for these groups with the goal of fostering communication, relationship building and sharing of ideas.

Activities within Women's Empowerment

SHGs: With minor interference from ALFA beyond initial start-up, women in Bambala and Karawara have assigned leaders and created structures for women to productively come together. The main goal is setting up a bank account with government subsidy to make loans available to the SHG members upon emergency. With two main policies of the group:

1. Each member deposit a set amount of money monthly an d

2. All members of the group must consent before a member takes out a

loan. These loans have paid for school fees, home repairs, and hospital bills without the high interest rate a moneylender might charge.

ALFA has been working for the empowerment of women from the last three years. The first SHG was formed in 2012 in Bambala village and our program is expanded to 15 villages now with 15 SHGs which has a total reach out of 198 women. SHGs were started and initiated to create an empowering space for women coming from the same socio-economic background where they can gather at one place and discuss the local issues on health, education, local governance, gender discrimination and communalism. This has helped women to be stable economically and socially stable. All the groups have four leaders elected by the group members and the group functions completely by all the group members only. ALFA is helping in forming new SHGs wherever there is a need, strengthening the existing SHGs, providing the capacity building training to the leaders and the regular members of the group and helping them in accessing the government schemes. With the help of SHGs, women are able to participate in the Panchayat meetings now and raise their voice on the local issues of the village. Women are also motivating and encouraging their children to go to school, to participate in the activities of Youth Resource Centres of ALFA and to work on social issues as they also believe that young people and their participation plays an important role in the development of the village.

"Must Bol": ALFA's workshop participation in the Community Youth Collective's (CYC). "Must Bol," or "Must Speak," allowed conversation and encouragement of women, children, and youth to speak up and stop gender-based violence. Film screenings, active

discussions, and guest speakers all helped make this program successful. This sensitization program not only worked again with young change makers, but allowed women to voice their opinions on social issues and what needs to change in their communities.

Health Assessments

Our friends from Taiwan also gave the women of Kherwara Block health assessments and brief education about maintaining personal health.

Vocational Workshops

ALFA's interns continuously work with women and facilitate vocational workshops to provide lessons with skills they may otherwise not have the opportunity to learn. Currently, a local tailor is providing sewing classes for an SHG so they might produce clothes of their own and sell them to a merchant in Udaipur. The money that these

women will earn will come second to the sense of pride and accomplishment they hope to feel because of this partnership.

Current Programs and Activities

Project Sisterhood

ALFA through 'Project Sisterhood' had formed 10 committees of dedicated young female youth in different villages of Kherwara Block. Each committee has 12 to 15 members (of which 4 are leaders) and meets once a month. In total, through the various committees, there are 40 leaders and 130 regular members coming from 22 villages of Six Panchayats. The committee is responsible for looking after gender-based issues faced within the community and discussing these issues in their monthly meetings. ALFA provides regular trainings, mentoring and facilitation to the leaders and supports them in solving those issues. The committees are also interacting, motivating and conducting sessions on Sexual

Reproductive Health Rights with the female youth of the village.

Safe City, Safe Safar Campaign

Udaipur City, 'The City of Lakes', is a beautiful and cultural diverse city attracting thousands of tourists each year. Nonetheless, instances of gender based violence are commonly experienced by females within the community. Young females have expressed concerns about the way males treat them in a myriad of public spaces, suggesting that they do not feel safe travelling at night or alone during the day.

Following successful work on gender based violence in the rural areas of Udaipur; ALFA has employed a number of these strategies in the city to tackle this issue and sensitize the community towards the protection and safety of woman. The 'Safe City, Safe Safar' campaign will include all sets of interactive activities which will aim at ending all types of violence happening in and around the city. The campaign involves dedicated and interested youth volunteers who will actively participate in all activities of the campaign. These activities include: theatre in public spaces, informative posters throughout the city, a youth camp, film screenings, seminars and capacity building training. The campaign will raise awareness on the issue and community members will be sensitized.

Youth Development

When ALFA began in 2006, the organization's initial focus was purely working with the youth (ages 18-35) in the area on literacy and education, knowledge of government schemes, and capacity building through workshops. By targeting this age group, ALFA's goal is to create young and active change makers throughout the community. Over time, ALFA saw that youth had great potential to not only change their lives and the lives of other youth, but to empower and encourage the same education

on their mothers, their younger brothers and sisters, and the entirety of their village. Thus, by focusing on youth and encouraging them to be opinionated and educated, ALFA is really focusing on the entire region. The youth are the future leaders of Kherwara Block, and it's never too early to begin leading. Focusing on this demographic will do the most long-term good for the village's economy, literacy rate, and overall standard of living.

Those change makers who are most involved and passionate about gaining knowledge are eligible for long-term volunteering and teaching positions at ALFA to continue to educate the community, or even fellowships and internships outside of Kherwara Block. There is so much potential for change in the Kherwara community, and it begins with the young community.

The youth of our community (ages 18-35), with their drive and determination

and distressing lack of appearance in local government and future planning, has the most potential to make a long-term positive change in their community. Their voices need to be heard, and we are pushing to hear them.

Activities within Youth Development

Youth and Governance: ALFA aims to educate local youth and children on government schemes that would help their family and livelihood, how to get involved in the local Panchayat, and why voicing their opinion is so important. NREGA, Right To Education (RTE), and Right to Information (RTI), are the schemes most covered, and workshops focus on protecting the youth against government corruption by knowing their rights.

Workshops

Recently, ALFA has facilitated many workshops dedicated to teaching passionate youth about conflict resolution within their communities, Hindi and English literacy,

and gender-based violence. Outside speakers knowledgeable in these areas are invited from Udaipur and the surrounding communities to ignite fires underneath the village youth and get them to discuss these various issues in depth. By building capacity in the youth of Kherwara Block, they are more motivated to further their education, pass the capacity along to their families, and build a better tomorrow.

Aaina Magazine: This monthly online and quarterly print publication highlights youth in the community with their personal stories, columns and articles that they have written, while also serving as a way to inform the community of ALFA's work and upcoming projects. Aaina is sold to the community, and is currently being developed as an online newsletter to inform partners and colleagues beyond Kherwara Block.

Past events/activities within Youth Development

In the winter of 2012, ALFA hosted a Youth Development program for committed and driven youth in the Kherwara Block community. The Youth Collective brought together 40 youth for a workshop at the Casa Training Centre in Bedla, Udaipur, December 20th, 2012. This workshop was aimed at building self confidence among today's youth and raising awareness about their immense role and capabilities in shaping the future of the entire country politically and economically. Beyond this, we hope that the workshops helped youth resolve internal conflicts and move on from self to society, bringing the wave of change to a larger audience. Young people from all over rural and urban Udaipur participated in the workshop. ALFA and CYC worked closely together to create an active learning environment that encouraged all youth to participate by voicing their opinions and asking questions. In addition to the

interactive sessions with the resource persons, youth participated in some cultural activities and teambuilding exercises. The workshop emphasized on importance of youth force, increasing their presence in political spheres so they can influence key policies that could take the country forward.

ALFA introduced the idea of 5th Space to the youth participants. After classifying the spaces each individual takes up in their lives, or family space, friend space, entertainment space, and work related space, 5th space is the fusion and integration of these areas of an individual's life and encourages open discussion in all areas. The intent was that no one should be afraid to discuss social issues and express their opinions, and thus the idea of 5th space was born.

April 2013 also marked the beginning of our Youth and Governance program, a priority for the organization over the next year until the 2014 Panchayat

elections. ALFA's goal is to motivate 15 youth in the community to become examples for their peers and elders when participating in communal politics. Beginning with a needs assessment and basic literary training on government schemes such as NREGA, Right To Education (RTE), and Right to Information (RTI), to the village youth to select participants and ending with 4 consecutive governance workshops, this 12-month initiative is meant to motivate youth and those they influence for years to come.

Youth Engagement Program

It is well documented that India is witnessing a demographic shift, quickly becoming one of the youngest countries in the world. It is home to one of the largest and fastest growing youth populations, with 40% of India's inhabitants aged between 18 and 35 years. At ALFA, we believe that it is crucial to recognize the youth as autonomous change agents who have the

energy, passion and creativity to make a difference to society rather than merely workers or consumers. ALFA maintains that by creating a '5th space' that is safe, empowering and inclusive and through facilitating cross border relationships amongst young people we can bring the youth together and create an awareness about the society they live in and its social, economic and political issues. ALFA's Youth Engagement Program will focus on school and collage youth in the age group 16 to 25 enabling youths to undergo a learning journey through Youth Resource Centres and ultimately building a group of young change makers equipped to make changes in both their own lives and in their communities. The program aims to foster self-development of the youth through life skills education, build social awareness, develop community leadership and challenge socio cultural boundaries though

encouraging friendships between people of diverse backgrounds.

A common collective space will be created for young people to come and learn and engage in activities such as: newspaper reading and discussions, health awareness activities, leadership and trust building activities, exposure visits to neighbouring communities, film screenings, cultural activities with foreign interns, field games, community volunteer projects, guest lectures, career guidance and educational classes on computer, English and Hindi languages.

Capacity building and leadership workshops

ALFA is constantly striving to identify the needs of the communities and needs within the organization itself. Once needs have been identified ALFA conducts capacity building training exercises in order to insure that ALFA community members are well equipped to tackle specific problems in the future. Additionally, ALFA

places great importance on developing leadership skills amongst the youth leaders so that they can effectively facilitate and mentor other youths in the community. ALFA believes in creating social change makers and several of these change makers have come out of various trainings and workshops.

Youth Advocacy Fellowship program

The Youth Advocacy and Fellowship Program aims to increase female education in the community by encouraging them to enrol in an educational institution. ALFA's five fellows worked and successfully secured place for 300 girls in local schools and 50 women in colleges and universities.

ALFA is currently running a "Youth Advocacy Fellowship" program in which ALFA is training young women/fellows from underprivileged Adivasi backgrounds to become education and women's rights advocates in the Kherwara block. These fellows are receiving training from ALFA to increase their self-confidence, leadership, and managerial capacities to enable them to solve social problems in their communities. These fellows spend most of their time convincing families to enrol their primary-aged girls in school and young women in universities. Fellows will also mentor young women from underprivileged Adivasi backgrounds and help place them in universities, colleges, and/or skill-based training programs. Upon completing of this 1-year program, fellows will have the knowledge and skills necessary to enact lasting change in their local communities.

Youth Centres

ALFA have secured three youth centres within the Kherwara block conducting programs with many youths each week. The establishment of ALFA youth centres are a positive presence in the community representing a place where core ALFA ideals can be openly explored and discussed. Youth centres are empowering

spaces for young people where they can participate and not be discriminated on the basis of caste, sex, religion, nationality Youth resource centres are a fundamental part of ALFA as they are the place that most of our activities are conducted and performed.

Youth Adda

ALFA conducts two Youth Adda's each month at our Youth Resource Centres in Karawara, Ghati and Bambala villages. Each addresses different themes such as: Self, Trust and Identity, Gender, Education and Local Communal Issues. Through creating a 5th space in schools and homes each theme is discussed in relation to the local community and conversation about how the youth participants are able to address the same issues themselves is facilitated. Youth Adda's have motivated several young leaders to actively engage in solving some of these issues in their own

communities tailoring social action projects to fit their specific needs.

Early and child marriage

'Ending Child Marriage - Progress and Prospects' (UNICEF, 2014), states India has the sixth highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Marriage at a young age prevents both girls and boys from exercising agency which is of paramount importance to making important life decisions and securing basic freedoms which include pursuing opportunities for education, earning a sustainable livelihood and good sexual health. ALFA maintains that early child marriage reinforces exiting gender, class, caste, religious and ethnic inequalities. Taking the findings from some preliminary research together ALFA proposed an intervention that would work towards the creation of a 5th space that would facilitate dialogue and engagement of young people on the issue of child marriage. Activities such as social action projects,

campaigns, engaging key stakeholders such as parents, teachers and local bodies were employed. Furthermore, cross border relationships between young people are fostered and encouraged though cross border engagements, peer visits and open dialogues.

Donors and Partners

- Pravah
- Centre for Social Studies and Secularism, CSSS

- National Foundation for India, NFI
- Unniti Foundation
- Youth Collective Delhi

Internship Program

ALFA hosts around 20 interns per year from three weeks to eight months. In the past, students have come from all over India, the Netherlands, Asia and the United States of America to further ALFA's mission in grassroots development. Interns bring new ideas and perspectives on community issues. ALFA is eager to expand this program in the future.

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