SVAYAMKRISHI PROJECT
Self-reliant and self-sustainable villages in India
Meet Our Changemakers
After two successful workshops in June and December 2019, we invited our changemakers to a four-day ‘Ideation to Action’ workshop in Mumbai between 17-20 February 2020.

This workshop was facilitated by Connecting Dreams Foundation, an Ashoka Partner and rural development organization. The main objective of the workshop was to guide the changemakers in transforming their ideas into feasible solution-providing models.
Day 1

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Session 1
(10:00 am - 1:30 pm)

Participants were welcomed by representatives from Ashoka and Connecting Dreams Foundation. Each discussed the history of their respective organizations and the importance of building self-reliant and sustainable villages. Participants introduced themselves by communicating aspects of their personal and professional life that they are good at and those that they would like to improve, kickstarting a week of exploratory conversations.

After being divided into teams, participants were asked to ponder over the question ‘Who is a Changemaker’ and present their thoughts. This was followed by a time-bound activity centered around team-building wherein they had to reproduce a complex diagram on paper. This activity enforced the importance of trust, communication, and teamwork.
Day 1

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Session 2
(2:30 pm - 5:30 pm)

Participants were introduced to the 4 key skills of changemaking - creative problem-solving, cognitive empathy, collaborative leadership, and teamwork. Participants were then asked to rate themselves on each of the changemaking skills on a scale from 0-5. Both sessions were punctuated with short inspirational videos of changemakers to encourage them to ideate and execute their ideas.

A video call with Dr. Ratnam Chitturi (President, North-South Foundation) and Yashveer Singh (Global Executive Director, Ashoka Young Changemakers) provided further motivation and encouragement. Sessions for the day were concluded with the participants preparing infographics summarizing the days learnings.
Workshop Summary

Day 2

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Session 1
(10:00 am - 11:15 am)

The session began with a shuffling of teams and reflection on the previous day’s learnings. The sessions for the day were designed around developing and practicing empathy.

The day began with an activity-based session on an incident that took place the night before, where two participants were involved in an argument with each other. All participants were divided into two large teams wherein each team functioned as an advocate for one of the participants, thinking about what could have motivated the other’s actions during the incident. Teams were then asked to present arguments in favor of the participant they were not representing, encouraging them to consciously think from another person’s perspective.
Day 2
Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Session 2
(11:30 am - 1:00 pm)

Participants were divided back into smaller teams and each team was presented with a case study.

Teams made use of empathy to identify the users in the case study and understand their situation. Each team then enacted the situation they were studying by imagining and creating stills. Post this activity, participants were taken for a field trip to the nearby settlement and beach. Participants were asked to interact with individuals they met during the trip and return with a compelling story and photograph.
Day 3

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Session 1
(9:30 am - 1:30 pm)

Participants shared the stories and photos they collected during the field trip and reflected on the previous day’s sessions.

Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to interact with 10 individuals from their respective villages to gather information on the various problems people are facing. This assignment was also discussed.

Participants were then grouped based on their geographic locations. Each group was asked to identify problems they would like to work on in the coming months. Mind maps were used for this brainstorming session.
Day 3
Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Session 2
(2:30 pm - 4:30 pm)

Teams wrote their ideas down on post-its. All teams combined, the number of ideas exceeded 100! The themes that emerged from this discussion included women empowerment, education, health, water, plastic, and employment.

Participants were introduced to the impact-effort matrix to understand how to categorize problems and the urgency of each issue. A goal-setting matrix was also shared that prompted participants to think about their strengths, challenges, resources, expenses, action required, and target dates to achieve their goals in terms of making their villages self-reliant and sustainable.

Participants worked on this matrix for the remaining day and prepared themselves for final presentations the next day.
Workshop Summary

Day 4

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)
Judges - Shri Arvind Rege, Member (Managing Committee, Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini) & Pallavi Ramane (Incubation Manager, Atal Incubation Center)

Final Presentations
(9:30 am - 11:30 am)

All 8 groups presented their plans for the upcoming months and received suggestions on how to best move forward from the judges present and team members from Ashoka and Connecting Dreams Foundation.

Participants have now been asked to start their work in their respective villages and share regular updates on the same.
Day 4

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Summary of Presentations:

1. Shivam and Siddhartha
   - They aim to open 12+ libraries in 12 villages from Uttar Pradesh
   - They have analysed the problems faced by the students in their surrounding villages; the students have received career counselling sessions and know where to apply for further studies, but the books they would require to prepare for the entrance exams are not available
   - Shivam and Siddhartha aim to provide access to library books for these children, both educational and recreational to encourage them to pursue further studies

2. Chhavi Yadav
   - She aims to work with widows and youth to educate them, help them develop their skills, and gain employment
   - She aims to educate 40 women out of which 10 will be trained with employable skills and the remaining 30 will be provided with basic education
   - The initiative will also aim to make the women achieve digital literacy
   - Skill development course: Chhavi aims to get the women enrolled in short courses where they will be taught cooking, stitching, etc.
Day 4

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Summary of Presentations:

3. Aniket Bhise
   - Has created a successful model of a low-cost tractor for marginal farmers
   - Wants to manufacture 10 such tractors with a team of 10 people. They have a designated area for the workshop where they can start manufacturing
   - Working on raising funds and procuring parts of the model to start working on their tractors

4. Naresh More
   - Working on sickle cell anaemia in the Adivasi area with people suffering from the disease
   - Has a team of 50-55 people working on making informative movies to create awareness on sickle cell anaemia in his community
   - The Dhadgaon Taluka is one of the only Talukas that has a hospital to treat sickle cell anaemia
   - The doctor is helping them with the cause. They have a hospital to treat the disease, yet 70-80% people are unaware.
   - Movies were made with funds collected through crowd-funding; the entire village is supportive of the cause
   - Aim is to create awareness among 60% people in the talukas about sickle cell anaemia and its treatment on time
Day 4

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Summary of Presentations:

5. Arun and Asha
   - They aim to teach children to learn and read easily
   - Their aim is to guide all the students with basic reading and writing knowledge before they join school
   - The unique quality of their model is that they use skateboarding to attract the children, with a play and learn technique that is both, enjoyable and effective
   - Challenges they are facing include convincing parents of younger children to trust them and see the value in their model.
   - There are children with special needs in their village whose parents are even more reluctant to send their children to Arun and Asha
   - They plan to raise INR 10,000/- for the resources that they may require
Summary of Presentations:

6. Lovepreet and ScienceDeep
   - They use theatre as a medium to create awareness among the villagers about drug abuse and addiction
   - They aim to rehabilitate 50 drug addicts in the next 6 months.
   - They plan to go to 100+ schools to create awareness campaigns and conduct activities with the children to educate them on the adverse effects of drug addiction
   - Challenges faced by them include people opposing their cause, threatening them to stop their activities and some people not trusting them or taking them seriously

7. Pradeep Mewada
   - He has made his village open defecation free and now wants to make it plastic free
   - He aims to oppose people using plastic bags by starting a campaign to create awareness around the adverse effects of polyethylene bags after their disposal
   - Challenges include dustbins not being available at homes and needing support from the panchayat to achieve this goal
   - He plans to take action in the surrounding villages as well
Day 4

Sessions facilitated by Amit Tuteja, Alok Sharma (Co-Founders, Connecting Dreams Foundation) and Vedika Jain (Ashoka India)

Summary of Presentations:

8. Rumi, Savita, and Purnima
   - Their aim is to improve primary education. They hope to teach 45 students between 3 to 12 years of age to learn and enhance their knowledge of Hindi and Maths in the next six months
   - They are working with 5 members in their team
   - Due to the lack of teachers in their schools, they have been conducting classes before and after school
   - In order to engage with and retain the children, they try to keep breakfast during the events they organise and felicitate the children at the end of the program
   - Challenges include parents not attending parent-teacher meetings, tough weather conditions sometime prevent children from attending their classes
   - They also aim to build a Self Help Group (SHG) in their village
Progress and Next Steps

- We now have a total of 12 changemakers from 6 states across the country.

- The identified changemakers have developed a detailed framework outlining their action plan to achieve their set goals.

- Following the workshop, they have been sharing weekly reports on their progress and any challenges they might be facing. For guiding and advising these changemakers, we will be connecting them to the Advisory Panel members and other social entrepreneurs in our network as and when required.

- As a next step, we will be conducting a webinar in two weeks with all the changemakers to review their progress on strengthening their villages, making their livelihoods and communities more self-reliant and sustainable.

- Field visits to the changemakers respective villages to reinforce and catalyse the project work will begin in April. During these visits, workshops at the village level will be organized as well.

- Following the field visits in April, we will be conducting virtual follow-up sessions to track the progress of the projects until the final workshop. The final workshop and impact assessment is scheduled to take place in July/August in New Delhi.