



Asia Pacific Schools Initiative

2019



Foundation Programme

Daily Documentation

CENTRE FOR
ESCALATION
OF PEACE

CEP

6th January 2019

Session 1: Welcome and Introduction

Venue: Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi

Summary: Saroj Thapa and Karishma Handa welcomed the participants to the second edition of the Asia Pacific School Initiative programme, 'Leadership through Serene Strength'. Neha Pradhan conducted short ice-breaker sessions for the participants to get to know each other which was then followed by Mr. Arun Kapur's brief introduction of the programme. He explained that Leadership through Serene Strength refers to the development of leaders who bear the watermarks of rigour, compassion and resilience, and who constantly work towards the mastery of Core Skills: comprehension, collaboration and assessment. He compared the process of acquiring Leadership through Serene Strength to a transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly.



Mr. Arun Kapur addressing the students

Later that evening, the participants boarded the train to Jhalawar.



Nizamuddin Train Station at 9 pm.

7th January 2019

Session 1: Visit to the Pallavan School

Venue: Pallavan School

Summary: All the participants were welcomed at Pallavan School in Jhalawar with *dhol*, *tilak*, and garlands. Once the participants were settled in the students of Pallavan gave a presentation on their school. This was followed by a Rajasthani folk dance performance by the school students.



A Rajasthani folk dance performance by the students of Pallavan School, Jhalawar

Session 2: Overview of the Programme

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The session began by understanding the importance of nurturing leadership and of creating a network of people to collaborate on projects that would help shape the world both of which are the main aims of APSI. The session was led by Saroj Thapa who

spoke about Leadership through Serene Strength. She spoke briefly about watermarks and core skills which defined it and assessment as a tool for development. She then detailed the programme. All the participants were to work on three projects, i.e. on the individual level -- creating roadmaps, the school/community project and finally the inter-country project. The process also involved making reflections, receiving feedbacks and creating a portfolio. The participants were divided into family groups which included six to seven students and two teachers each from a different school. Each family group was assigned a coordinator from the APSI core team.



So the programme began in earnest

Session 3: Five Areas of Development

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Session 3 was conducted by Manpreet Kaur of Vasant Valley School , the focus of which was on the Five Areas of Development. It started with a short film created by Vasant Valley students that showcased what development meant to the students at the school. Manpreet then explained at length the Five areas of Development -- Cerebral, Social, Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual. The concept of Five Areas of Development is the foundation for creating roadmaps.

Session 4: Presentation on Roadmaps

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: In session 4, Ram Chandra Dahal of The Royal Academy, Bhutan, facilitated the experience on the creation of roadmaps. All the participants were shown how they could

create their individual roadmaps -- a self-regulation tool that shows evidence of one's own growth. He started off by explaining what a roadmap is, why it is needed, and what purpose it serves. Students and teachers were then encouraged to make their own roadmaps that revolved around the Five Areas of Development. In each of these areas they set their goals, a time limit, and specified their path to success as well as indicators of success. With the roadmaps now in place, each participant had a plan as reference in order to achieve their goals.



Ram Chandra Dahal of The Royal Academy, Bhutan, talking about roadmaps

Session 5: School Presentations

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: In Session 5 six of the schools that were participating in the APSI gave presentations about their schools, the order of which was selected at random. The representatives now had an opportunity to share their school's philosophy and vision, the traditions they followed, and the activities they took part in. There were moments that brought smiles and some that inspired everyone participating in the programme.



The team from Panyaprateep School, Thailand, making a presentation on their school

Session 6: Session for Teachers on their Roles

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Session 6 included a special session for teachers on the programme and their role in it. The session stressed that the teachers were as much a participant as the students. They were explained their various roles and expectations in family groups and project groups besides being responsible for their own students.

8th January 2019

Session 1: Discussion on Meditation and Mindfulness

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The session led by Thupten Tsewang dealt with important questions that led to a healthy discussion and self-reflection among all the participants. They were asked to think about what meditation means to them and what the process involved. For some meditation involved a quiet headspace by breathing in and out; for others it was peaceful music in the morning. The importance of a mental as well as – if not more – a physical hygiene was discussed. The session ended with the showing of a video on “Why Mindfulness Is a Superpower” which highlighted that mindfulness and meditation are going to be the next public health revolution.



A session on the importance of meditation

Session 2: Visit to Kota Mines

Venue: Kota Mines

Summary: The experience of visiting a mining site was an eye-opener for everyone. The participants got a chance to interact with the owners and the miners. The speakers explained the entire process of boring, digging and mining. There was a detailed discussion on the stakeholders as well as the costs involved at different levels. The role of the government, threats to the ecology and environment were also discussed in detail. The participants got a chance to observe the site from different lenses: that of the proprietors, the consumers, workers and of the environment conservationists. The exploration of concepts such as 'aesthetics' and 'exploitation' left an indelible mark on the participants.



View of a stone mine

Session 3: Discussion and Reflection

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: All the participants reflected on the visit to the Kota Mines among their family groups and one member from each group presented the ideas. Various topics – such as aesthetics, lack of responsibility, accountability, humanity, sensitivity, disposal of waste, corruption, daily wages of the workers and health care facilities – were discussed.



Reflecting on the visit to Kota Mines

Session 4: Discussion on the Asia-Pacific Region

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Led by Smriti Sabarwal of Shiv Nadar School, Gurgaon, the participants were asked to define what constitutes a region. They discussed a number of common traits: history, geography, culture, art and traditions, society, economy, and common challenges. The history of old and new regionalism was debated, and the consequences of interdependence of countries. The participants then took part in an activity where they discussed how Asia-Pacific can be considered a region/community. Another argument involved the Asia Pacific as an Amoeba Phenomenon – the number of countries that it comprises of; and the integration of the Asia Pacific region.



Defining a region

Session 5: Presentation by Six Schools

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The remaining six schools presented their respective schools in an interactive manner. Some made powerpoint presentations, some sang the songs composed about their school, some used videos, and some just gave eloquent speeches. It helped the participants understand the variety of backgrounds each one of them came from and learn to appreciate that diversity.



A presentation by the team from Habibia School, Kabul

Session 6: Session for Teachers on Facilitation Skills

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Session 6 included a special presentation for teachers on the qualities of a good facilitator. It included an explanation of what facilitation is about as well as some dos and don'ts. There was a special emphasis on resolution of conflict in a group situation and how to give everyone a chance to be heard. Teachers were then able to share their experiences and concerns about their family groups.



A session for the teachers

9th January 2019

Session 1: Meditation

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Thupten Tsewang led the session on meditation. He spoke about understanding the difference between mindful vs. mind full; and the meaning of Gyom(habituation: every practice eventually becomes a habit). He shared his experiences of Single Content Meditation: e.g. breathing, concentration and the challenges that come with it. He ended with Analytical Meditation which involves using analysis for meditation, e.g. thinking of something, and then practicing it.



Thupten Tsewang leads the session on meditation

Session 2: Understanding Watermarks and Skills

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Every group were given an activity. Upon completion each family group were to find the objective behind the given task based on watermark and skills. Group 1(Compassion): each member of the group shared ways in which to be compassionate and made a word tree. Group 2 (Comprehension): the group did an in-depth analysis of socio-economic implication of the Kota mines from different perspectives. Group 3 (Rigour): the group came up with ways of doing one's best and stretching the limits. They had to stage a short play to illustrate the point. Group 4 (Resilience): the group took part in an activity

which was very frustrating, and they had to find ways to bounce back. Group 5 (Assessment): every student and teacher shared their hardships, how they learned to assess themselves, and how it helped them. Group 6 (Collaboration): 'If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together' is the group motto. They had to make a painting together, each using only one colour. Each group reviewed the presentations and gave written feedback.



Taking part in activities based on watermarks and skills

Session 3: Team-building through Theatre Activity

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Participants took part in a theatre exercise to develop their understanding of 'Mind, Memory, Interpretation and Knowledge'. This session was led by Deeksha of Shiv Nadar School, Noida. It was an interactive and fun session which was enjoyed by all the participants.



Participants taking part in a theatre exercise



Session 4: Sports Activity

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The participants took part in a sports activity with the objective of learning how to keep faith in others and work together.



Taking part in a sports activity

Session 5: Peer Feedback and Self-assessment

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The watermarks and skills presentation from Session 2 was reviewed. Each group analyzed the outcomes and bettered their understanding of the concept based on the peer feedback they received. The session ended on a discussion on constructive criticism between family groups.



Reviewing Skills and Watermarks from Session 2

Session 6: Passion Groups

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: In this session, students spoke about their passions -- music, acting, painting, poetry, photography, travelling, dancing, reading and beat-boxing are some of the interests which students wanted to explore in the next few days.



Speaking about their passions

Session 7: Teachers Session

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: This session focused on documentation and profile writing for students. It was felt that profile/report writing will help teachers to understand the students and to feel connected with them. The role of the teachers was also discussed. Roadmaps, daily reflections, observations, students profile by family group, and student profile in project groups, are some of the areas documented. The need for teachers to be mentors in the project groups was spoken about. The focus then shifted to 'how to gather information?' Saroj Thapa pointed out that objectivity vs. bias, respecting diversity, gender sensitivity and cultural sensitivity were some of the points necessary to keep in mind while gathering information.

10th January 2019

Session 1: Visit to an Organic Farm and College of Horticulture and Forestry

Venue: Organic Farm and College of Horticulture and Forestry, Manpura Village, Jhalawar

Summary: The morning started with the visit to an organic farm where Dr. Acharya, retired Dean of the College of Horticulture and Forestry, Jhalawar, gave a brief introduction about organic farming and its need in the present times. He discussed how chemical fertilizers and pesticides affect the soil and human health, leading to disturbances in the ecosystem and cause an agricultural non-point source pollution. Mr. Hukum Chandra, a leader in the field of organic farming spoke about its benefits and how farmers in the surrounding 22 villages joined the movement and adopted this practice. He discussed different herbs that can be used to cure ailments like asthma and arthritis. He also shared different recipes that can be used to produce natural fertilizers and pesticides using ingredients such as neem (*Azadirachta indica*), jaggery, cow dung, vegetable and fruit peels, wheat bran, rice water etc. This was followed by the visit to College of Horticulture and Forestry where the Dean of the College Mr. Rajiv Maurya addressed the students. He took them around the strawberry farm and polyhouse where they grow tomatoes, and spoke about the process and mandates of growing plants under polyhouse, optimum temperature and moisture conditions, and the benefits of mulching and drip irrigation. He also demonstrated the process of refining honey in the Apiculture and Honey Processing Unit established within the college premises. All the talks were followed by thought-provoking questions from the participants.



Students listening to a presentation on Organic Farming



Gathering strawberries in the College of Horticulture

Session 2: Session on Community

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Conducted by Neha Pradhan, the session was a cluster of small activities conducted with students in order to make them familiar with the idea of community and its essence in daily lives. Various activities were carried out where students were asked to form groups on the basis of common birthday months, language, schools, state, favourite food, colour of the attire worn by them etc. In one of the activities the students were provided with a definition of community and they were then asked to align themselves at one of the four pillars -- agree, strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree according to their opinion and understanding of the definition. This was followed by an enriching discussion which supported as well as bolstered their understanding, and then they realigned themselves as their outlook changed. Some students thought community is more about the sense of belonging while others felt it was more about taking care of each other and coming from a common social background. In another activity, the family groups were asked to come up with their own definition of community which is relevant for them. They were also asked to form groups on the basis of connections and similarities between their school team and other school teams in response to which all the students came together, held each other's hands and formed a big circle as they all announced that they are a

single community having the same vision and mission to participate in the APSI 2019 and become future leaders.



Neha Pradhan leading the session on Community



Students engaged in different activities during the session

Session 3: Sports Activity

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The different sports activities conducted were based on the idea of improving concentration and teamwork. Each of the students energetically participated in all the sport activities.



Sports activities in session

Session 4: Presentation on Banjaras

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Mahtab Alam from Pallavan School, Jhalawar, gave an informative presentation on the Banjara community residing in the Jhalawar region. He spoke about their evolution from wanderers and salt gatherers to settled agriculture farmers and government workers. He also spoke about their culture, artwork, lifestyle, festivals and religion. Students then raised questions regarding issues and challenges faced by the community in present times.



Mahtab Alam speaks about the Banjara community

11th January 2019

Session 1: Nature Walk

Venue:Jheer Nursery, Jhalawar, Rajasthan

Summary: The day started early with half the group going for a nature walk led by Dr . Chauhan. He spoke to the group on a range of topics: the importance of nurseries, climate change, and the tangible and intangible role of forests in our ecosystem. He helped the participants learn about the local ecology by playing a game where each student was made to stand under a tree and given the scientific name to remember. The key take-away from the visit to the nursery was the importance of respecting every living organism.



Nature walk with Dr Chauhan

Session 2: Meditation

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: On day 5, the meditation session was led by Jie Ma, the teacher from Panyaprateep School, Thailand. He led the 'Mindfulness Cultivation Meditation' session which left everyone energized and ready to face the packed day ahead.



Mindfulness Cultivation Meditation led by Jie Ma

Session 3: Visit to Chandrabhaga River and Temple Complex

Venue: Chandrabhaga River and Temple Complex

Summary: For the day's excursions, the participants were split into two groups of three family groups each. Both groups visited the two sites -- the Chandrabhaga temples and the Saras Dairy. At the Chandrabhaga river, the participants got to observe the ecosystems supported by the river but expressed concern about the polluted state of the river. At the temples, the participants learned about the local history, and the foreign participants got to learn about Hinduism from their Indian counterparts. The participants got ample time to explore the temple complex and marvel at the beauty of the temple architecture.



At Chandramouleshwara temple complex

Session 4: Visit to Saras Dairy

Venue: Saras Dairy

Summary: At the Saras Dairy Plant, the group learnt all about dairy products and the processes behind their manufacture and packaging. It was fascinating to see all the machinery used to make a product consumed by almost everyone everyday across the country. The group learnt that the facility collected 25,000 litres of milk every day to package six kinds of milk, ghee, butter, paneer, yogurt, shrikhand and lassi. Besides being educational, the visit made everyone realize the amount of labour and resources that went into everyday products, and how important it was to be mindful about what we consumed.



At Saras Dairy

Session 5: Areas of Exploration

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The session was held to identify and define the 'Seven Areas of Exploration' The words, phrases and definitions that came up for each are as follows: **Aesthetics** is the appreciation of beauty in the simplest things; **Environment**: Surroundings; everything we interact with in our physical surroundings; **Evolution of Society**: Change in mindset;

reforms; improvements; how society grows and changes with time through experience; **Economy**: Money; market; resources; **Livelihood**: Work; means of living; action taken to earn money to have a lifestyle; occupation; job; way to secure necessities; **Communities**: Groups of interdependent people interacting; a sense of belonging; **Philosophy**: Way of thinking; view point; theory of existence; questioning; study; philosophy of different disciplines; people questioning more to understand themselves.

After this exercise, all the experiences and sessions held so far were listed out, and there was a discussion on which areas of development were associated with each. It was concluded that all the areas were interconnected and isolating an experience as pertaining to only one area of development was impossible. This was followed by discussions in family groups to identify similar examples in the participants' own countries of issues and situations as seen in Jhalawar.



Discussion on Areas of Exploration

Session 6: Leadership

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The session started with an ice-breaking activity where the participants formed a circle and each person named something they liked. If anyone else shared the same likes, they said "true that!" and if they felt so very passionately, "true that double true!" The take-away from this activity was that everyone is more similar than they think and they discovered ways in which they were connected.

Aneesha Dass introduced Leadership as a fluid and subjective term and involved everyone in a fun activity -- the making of a 'leadership soup' where each person puts in an 'ingredient' which is a quality they thought was important in a good leader, in as much quantity as they thought was needed. Some of the 'ingredients' that came up often were vision, responsibility, patience, support and respectfulness. From this activity it was clear that there are lots of intangible qualities a leader must possess. She then discussed leadership more in detail. Next, Aneesha addressed the importance of communication as an important skill for a leader to have. To demonstrate this, the participants played a game where they were divided into groups and further pairs, and each pair was asked to describe an object (written on chits they drew) to the other pair through a conversation. Through this the importance of body language in communication was also demonstrated. This was further explained through the TED talk "How to talk so people will listen" by Julian Treasure. Another TED talk "How to be an everyday leader" by Drew Dudley followed to show how everyone can be a leader by having an impact in everyday situations. In the end the participants shared their key take-aways from the session.



A session on leadership

Session 7: Movie "Latcho Drom"

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The day ended with the participants watching the documentary film "Latcho Drom". The film tells the story of gypsy communities across the world. After watching the film and seeing the way the communities live, the participants could better visualize the life of the Banjara community about which they had learnt the previous day.



Watching the documentary film "Latcho Drom"

12th January 2019

Session 1: Nature Walk

Venue: Jheer Nursery, Jhalawar, Rajasthan

Summary: The day began earlier for groups 4, 5 and 6 as they were taken to a nursery in Jhalawar where they were introduced to the different species of a flora found in the region by Mr. Chauhan.



Nature walk led by Mr Chauhan

Session 2: Guided Meditation

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The day began with some quiet time and a guided meditation by Yongje Mingyur Rinpoche.



Day begins with meditation

Session 3: Visit to Gagron Fort

Venue: Gagron Fort

Summary: The participants visited Gagron Fort with Mr. Lalit Sharma, an archaeologist, and learned about the history and culture of Gagron. He spoke about the five characteristics that made the fort unique and different from the other North Indian forts. It was interesting to note that the fort was not built on a foundation, but rather on the rocks of the Aravali range and was an important centre for peace.



At Gagron Fort

Session 4: Choice of Project Areas and Discussion on Research

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The participants opted to explore an area they were most passionate about and were grouped accordingly. These areas of exploration are what their projects would be based on, and a presentation will be made at the end of nine months. A discussion was led by Saroj Thapa on how to carry out research, and the steps in conducting it. It included a conversation on ethical research methods and how to avoid plagiarism.



Discussion on Research

Session 5: Sports Activities

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The activities conducted by Aneesha, apart from being fun, focused on the values of teamwork, focus and patience.

Session 5: Mandana Art

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The participants saw a demonstration of Mandana art, a folk art form of Rajasthan by the local women. First, a mixture of cow dung and soil is spread on the floor. Once it dries, designs are made with chalk powder. These paintings are made during auspicious occasions, and designs change with different festivals as each pattern has its own significance. The participants got an opportunity to use their creativity and design their own bookmarks.



Mandana Art

13th January 2019

Session 1: Leadership

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Gaurav Saklani began the session by soliciting opinions from the students on what they understood by the term 'leadership' and what some of the traits suited for a good leader were in their view. The discussion revolved around the concept that leadership is not an adjective but a verb. Anybody can be a leader, but situations matter. A good leader makes other people lead too. Leaders too are often faced with many challenges for which they may not immediately have solutions.



Gaurav Saklani conducting a session on Leadership

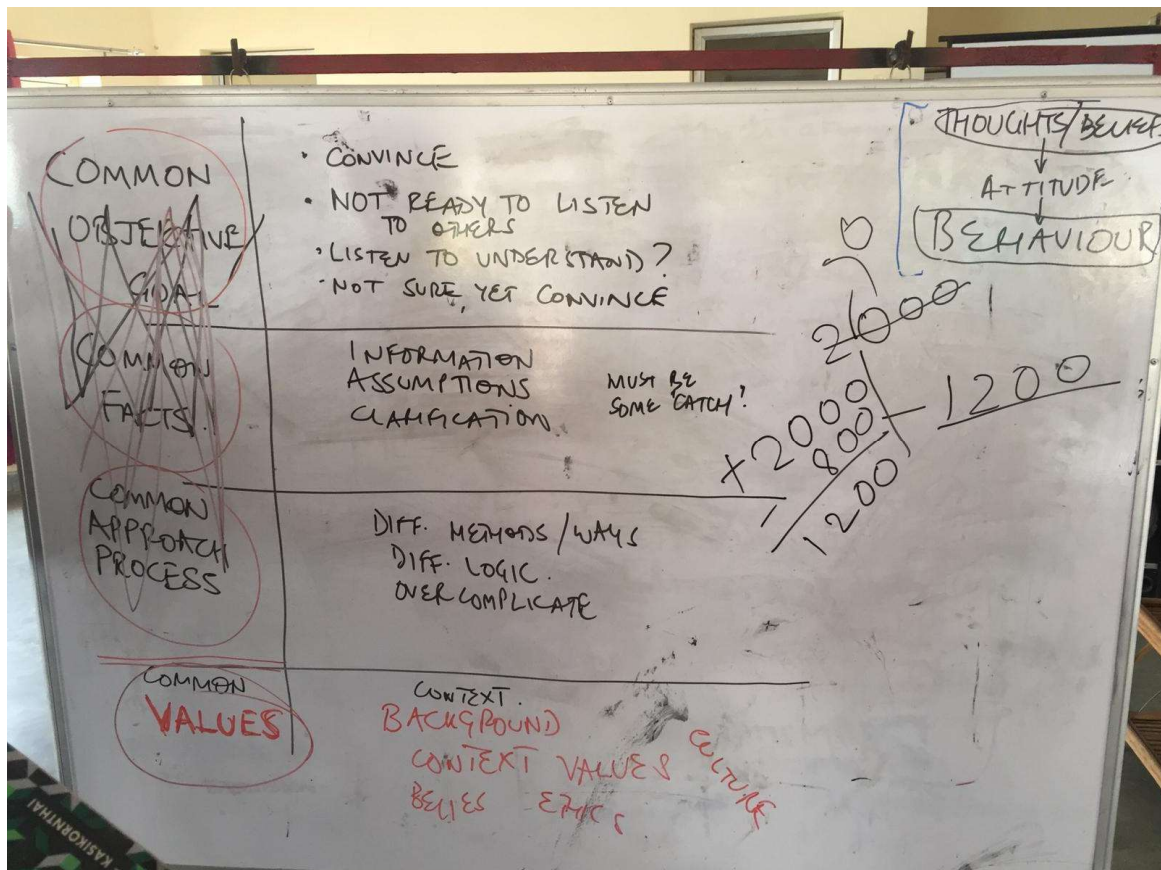
Session 2: Belief System

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Gaurav Saklani recounted a short story followed by a question: A woman goes to a shopkeeper to purchase a pair of slippers that cost Rs. 1200. The woman hands the shopkeeper a Rs. 2000 note. The shopkeeper doesn't have change. He borrows change for

the Rs.2000 from his neighbour and gives the slippers, and Rs. 800 balance to the woman. Later that evening the neighbour comes running and tells the shopkeeper that the Rs. 2000 note was fake. The shopkeeper then gives the neighbour Rs. 2000 and takes back the fake rupee note. Participants were asked a simple question - what was the loss (financial) incurred by the shopkeeper assuming cost price of the slipper was Rs. 1200? The participants were not allowed interaction to arrive at an answer.

Individuals came up with many different answers. Groups were made based on those answers. Then 15 minutes were given for the groups to arrive at a common solution. The outcome was to test the resolve in one's own belief, and to question why other people were coming to different conclusions despite having the same information. The answer, which was not revealed until later was Rs. 2000. How can the loss caused by a Rs.2000 fake note be more than Rs. 2000? Participants were finally relieved – it was also interesting to see group dynamics at play because individuals who had initially given Rs. 2000 as the result had changed their answers during the group discussion. In situations that are time bound, it is easy for preconceptions, seemingly logical narratives and dominant voices, to dominate the situation leading to false conclusions. The discussion that followed looked at the importance of understanding the reasons behind one's beliefs while being cognizant of the opinions of others.

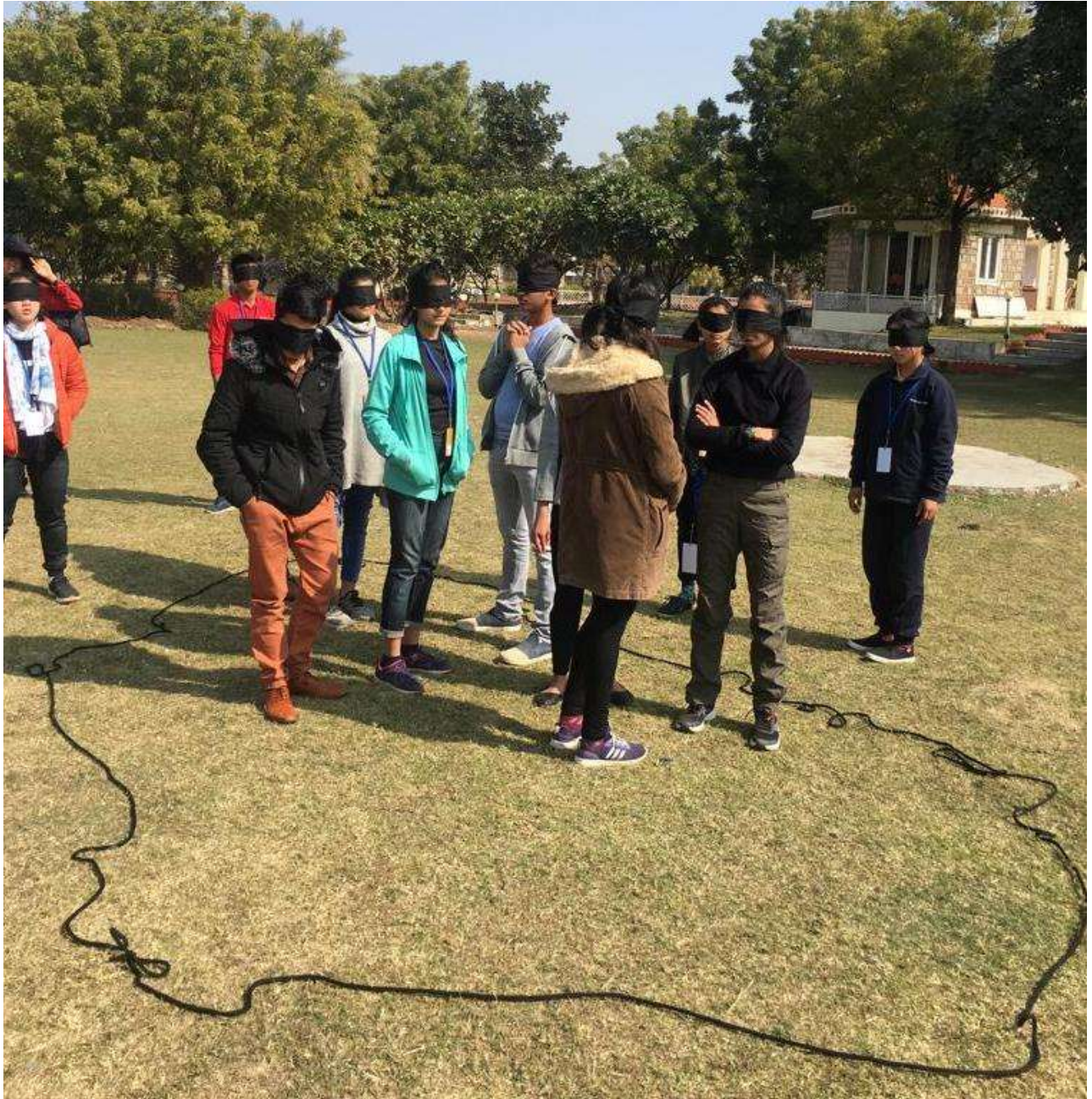


Discussion on Belief Systems

Session 3: Listening and Inclusion

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: During this session participants were divided into two groups, blind-folded, and were asked to form a square out of a rope. The activity was followed by a discussion. Participants had varying levels of satisfaction -- reasons for a high level of satisfaction included greater participation, planning, cooperation, relinquishing control and some people naturally taking on a leadership role, and focusing on the process rather than the results. The reasons for medium satisfaction included chaos because participants didn't select a leader, poor communication, very high expectations, plunging into ambiguity without discussion, too many people saying too many things, and not listening enough. The participants shared their feelings about being a leader or being a follower, the importance of the process versus the result, and dealing with failure. Participants also shared their views on what they would have done differently – using the benefit of hindsight. Many said they would have changed their approach. The activity showed how leadership is not about entitlement but more about listening and inclusion.



An activity in blindfolds

Session 3: Win-win Situations

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: To illustrate and drive home the point that good leaders look for win-win solutions in times of conflict instead of a win-lose solution, Gaurav Saklani had the students play a strategy game in teams that required them to collaborate with each other in order to win the game. Without collaboration and trust of the other teams, the game could only end in everyone losing. However, since the students were expected to come to this realization on their own, the winning strategy was not communicated to the playing teams

ahead of time and was only told at the conclusion of the game. And as expected, rather than collaborating, teams played against each other, and everyone involved in the game lost. Afterwards, Gaurav Saklani led a reflection session through which students learned the error in their strategy and the importance of collaboration, and finding win-win solutions in times of conflict, a trait good leaders are known to exhibit.



An exercise on the importance of collaboration

14th January 2019

Session 1: Quiet Time and Meditation

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Jie Ma carried out a guided meditation session on focusing on one's attention and accepting all kinds of emotions one goes through, positive or negative.



Meditation session conducted by Jie Ma

Session 2: Visit to Kolvi Caves

Venue: Kolvi Caves

Summary: The participants went on a field trip to the Kolvi Caves about 90 km away from RTDC Resort, Jhalawar. Built in 4th century the sculptures reflected the Buddhist traditions and the lives led by monks. There were about 50 caves with many statues of Buddha. Some of them eroded over time or destroyed by human intervention. Participants reflected on what they saw and discussed the interactions and clashes between Hinduism and Buddhism.



At Kolvi Caves

Session 3: Discussion on Leadership through Serene Strength

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The session started with a definition of Serene Strength (SERENE - calm, composed, peaceful, tranquil, non-violent, compassionate; STRENGTH- endurance, strong willed, powerful, self-controlled, disciplined). It was an extension a discussion from Gaurav Saklani's session the day before: Leadership is a verb not a noun; it is an action, not a position. Some of the important points touched upon were: being serene while showing strength; physical strength vs mental strength; changing the inner world before tackling the outer one; self-regulation through practice, disciple, will power, and understanding experiences are essential for serene strength; the importance of being a self-guru is the potential to be a great leader.



Participants define Serene Strength

Session 4: Group Discussion on Projects (Internal discussion) + Work in Project Groups

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Students and teachers sat in their respective groups to discuss their projects.



Groups involved in intense discussions to decide the topics for their inter -country projects

15th January 2019

Session 1: Meditation

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Neha Pradhan took the session on meditation, which included understanding oneself, remembering one's past, present and imagining one's future, understanding the importance of togetherness, thinking to create the story, being the leader of one's dreams, thinking about collectiveness and transformation.



A session on meditation by Neha Pradhan

Session 2: Visit to Weavers' Co-operative and Ritinjali Skill Development Centre

Venue: Weavers' Co-operative and Ritinjali Skill Development Centre, Aswan

Summary: Session 2 comprised of understanding the idea of economy and livelihood. The participants visited the Ritinjali Skill Development Centre in Aswan, outside Jhalawar as

well as the Weavers' Co-operative nearby. The Ritinjali Skill Development Centre has 4 category of vocational training, i.e. a two-wheeler mechanic course, house-wiring course, a weaving centre, and stitching clothes, opened in May 2018. The NGO's purpose is to empower those who don't have the opportunity to earn. The Weavers' Co-operative has 1100 working women from the villages around Aswan, and functions with the help of the Rajasthan government. They supply their products to certain boutiques in Delhi and participate in handloom fairs in different cities.

The participants witnessed the amount of intricate work involved in creating a piece of handloom, and discussed that lack of resources is one of the factors which restricts local people in village areas from growing.



A visit to the Ritinjali Skill Development Centre



Admiring the craft at the Weavers' Co-operative

Session 3: Project Work in Groups

Venue: Pallavan School

Summary: This session comprised of the groups discussing strategy for their upcoming projects. Timelines, roadmaps, objectives, topics and specializations were considered. One of the main focus areas of each group was to discuss roadmaps. Creating a research structure and dividing their study as per geography was one of the key outcomes in every group.



Participants strategizing over their upcoming projects

Session 4: Sports Activity

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: There were a series of fun sporting activities organised by AneeshaDass with the intended outcome of learning how to have faith in others and work together.

Session 5: Cultural Evening

Venue: Pallavan School

Summary: A presentation of Bindauri folk dance with drums set the tone for a fun evening organised by the Pallavan School for the participants of Asia Pacific Schools Initiative. The rhythm soon had everyone joining in the dancing. A sumptuous traditional Rajasthani dinner completed the evening. Dancing continued well into the night.



Participants treated to a Bindauri folk dance and a Rajasthani meal

16th January 2019

Session 1: Meditation Session

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Jie Ma conducted the last meditation session with a guided meditation for attaining the calmness and inner peace.

Session 2: School Group Project Discussions

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: After the meditation session, the participants were given some time where they sat with their respective school teams and planned out their upcoming school project. Each school team then presented it to other participants and received constructive feedback and suggestions that could be incorporated to improve the implementation of their projects.



School teams presenting their plans for School Projects

Session 3: Project Group Discussion and Presentation

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: In the first half of the session, the participants were asked to sit in project groups and work on their presentation. In the second half of the session, the five groups presented their ideas, objectives, processes, actions and expected impacts/outcomes of the projects. The other groups were asked to provide suggestions and feedbacks. Following are the project groups:

1. **Philosophy Group:** "Why do we do What we do?"

2. **Livelihood Group:** Economy and Livelihood in South Asia: Exploring Opportunities and Challenges
3. **Aesthetics Group:** Environment, Oneself and Culture
4. **Community Group:** LGBTQ : growth and evolution in different countries
5. **Environment Group:** Waste Management: Don't be trashy!



Session 4: Sports Activity

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: The activity was focused on making students sensitive about the power of advantage and position, and how to use it to provide fair and equal opportunities to all. It made students aware about the children with disability, economically weaker section etc. In the beginning of the session participants had different views but by the end of the session they felt inspired to be sensitive towards people from different walks of life.



Creating sensitivity about being in positions of advantage and the responsibility that comes with it

Session 5: Presentation on Geography of Jhalawar Region

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Professor Hamid Ahmad from the local college made a presentation on the geography of the Jhalawar region which included the topography, climate, rainfall, rivers, drainage system, soil, vegetation, flora and fauna of Jhalawar. He also talked about the large scale Kota mining done in the area and its socio-cultural, economic and environmental impact on the immediate surroundings.



Professor Hamid Ahmad's presentation

Session 6: Passion Group Presentations

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Post dinner, the participants from different countries gathered near the bonfire, grouped themselves as per their passions and presented their talents. Some students performed beautiful traditional as well as western dances while others acted in a thought-provoking and meaningful short play on the lives of gypsies. The students passionate about music presented enthralling performances integrating music from beat-box, guitars and casio. The night came to an end with a group captivating everybody's attention with their singing.

17th January 2019

Session 1: Project Group Discussions

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: On the last day of the programme, the participants sat in their project groups to discuss the way forward. The objective of the discussion was to have clarity on the title of their project, the process, individual responsibilities, timeline (roadmap), logistics (how everyone will stay connected).



Session 2: The Way Forward

Venue: RTDC Resort

Summary: Every project group presented their plans on way forward. After each presentation, there was a verbal feedback session: The Environment group mentioned that one of their strategies to address waste management was segregation. They were then asked what they would do with the segregated waste to ensure that it didn't just end up mixed in a landfill. As a response the group were going to try and come up with ways to reuse or recycle the waste.

The Aesthetics group was asked to be very sensitive in the way they approached their projects, whether it had to do with the environment or mental health, which were some of the topics they plan to cover.

The Economy group is planning individual projects with common objectives. The concern the other participants had was that they weren't working in a collaborative manner.

The Community group plans to create awareness about the LGBTQ community and were cautioned to be very sensitive. Some of the participants belong to countries where it is illegal to talk about these issues publicly so they would have to take permission from the School Principal before they proceeded any further. In the event that they did not get permission, they would conduct academic research on the topic.

The Philosophy group's methodology to achieve their goal of creating self-awareness was questioned to which they said that would have to do considerable research before setting up a framework to collect data.



The evening was spent playing games and preparing for the journey back to Delhi.



18th January 2019

A farewell lunch for the first phase of the programme was hosted at the India International Centre. Mr. Arun Kapur congratulated everyone on the successful completion of the Foundation Programme, but reminded everyone that the real challenge lay ahead. Goodbyes were said with expressions of strong commitment to stay connected and complete the tasks the participants had set for themselves.

