



Amit Patro

~ Alumnus of International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), Gangtok

Looking back, it feels good to know I can make a difference and help someone. It is about watching them grow, knowing how their journey has been, and in turn getting inspired by how they faced and overcame challenges.

Avinash Dadhich

~ Alumnus of International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), New Delhi



I believe beyond a certain age, we cannot teach or mentor someone; one can just help and be a facilitator in their learning process. In fact one needs to forget one is a mentor and act as a friend, like an equal.

Chirantana Kar

~ Alumna of International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), Hyderabad



My mentorship style varied with each mentee, with one it meant late night phone calls, with the others, helping create a questionnaire during their research-phase, or identifying resources within my personal networks during implementation. It is about being there for them in the ways they need.

Parveen Hafeez

~ Alumna of Fortune/U.S. Department of State Global Women's Mentoring Partnership Program, Ernakulam



My role was to guide mentees with their dream projects, to provide clarity when they were unsure and to encourage them when they hit a roadblock. During such times, it was imperative to make them understand the importance of persistence.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Since the 1960s, thousands of Indians have participated in U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs, enhancing people-to-people ties between India and the U.S. In late 2014, the U.S. Embassy New Delhi came together with Pravah, a Delhi-based NGO that has been working on building leadership for social change with and amongst adolescents, young people and educators since 1993, to engage young exchange alumni in a leadership and mentoring program.



Through the *I Have a Dream* program, led and facilitated by Pravah and funded by the U.S. Embassy New Delhi, over 150 student and young professional exchange alumni from 18 states across India were brought together. These young women and men, along with over 60 mentors, who are senior exchange alumni and prominent professionals from all walks of life, attended workshops held in Chennai, Delhi, Dharamsala, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai between December 2014 and May 2016.

Pravah's deep understanding and experience of over 20 years, and a unique perspective on youth development was brought into the *I Have a Dream* program. Here, the main motivation was to deepen exchange experiences and to make mentees more aware of their place and role in their immediate and extended contexts. This was done with the intention to provide stimulation to take on more active regional and global roles. To participate, the invited alumni were asked to imagine one personal and one societal goal they aspired to attain, to be put into action with support from the assigned mentor.

Through the unfolding of these accounts one notices the transformational journey that began to take place from the perspective of each of these participants—mentees as well as mentors. For the senior mentor alumni, this workshop became a platform to give back by way of mentoring young people. The *I Have a Dream* program thus became a nurturing space for introspection, self-work, and self-awareness, and the activities there acted as an invitation to re-invoke the dreams envisaged during their exchange periods in the United States.

I Have a Dream

Leadership and Mentoring Program for International Exchange Alumni

Inspiring stories of young alumni from India, who have participated in United States Government-sponsored exchange programs



This mentoring program was sponsored by the U.S. Mission to India

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The Mentors

Listening to people open up about their fears and struggles gave me a sense of the battles everyone faces. I am a shut-down, reclusive kind of person; however, listening to others made me want to share my own story. It felt necessary to not conceal, and to open up and talk about the dreams and fears that were bothering me.



Abrar Ali Khan

~ Alumna of The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange & Study (YES) Program, Chennai

It had been almost three years since my participation in the Study of U.S. Institutes (SUSI) Women's Leadership Program in 2012. The dreams and aspirations I had during my exchange year, upon return, had somewhat faded. The *I Have a Dream* workshop helped me refresh those aspirations and brought them to the foreground.



Adriana Michael

~ Alumna of Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders (SUSI), Lucknow

As an engineering student in India, I always felt a lot of disconnect between theory and practice, and this awareness heightened during my trip to the United States as part of the Community College Initiative (CCI) exchange program. During my exchange year, I was stimulated and inspired by the practice-driven pedagogical approach adopted by my professors there.



Avinash Shripal Maurya

~ Alumna of Community College Initiative Program (CCIP), Mumbai

The energizers were really nice and I practice them with my students. As an assistant professor, I am aware of the short attention span students have and it is commendable how the facilitators could sense us withdrawing into our own worlds. Some of these I have taken to my classroom and this has helped me in my teaching as well.



Mohammed Fazil Shareef

~ Alumna of Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders (SUSI), Pune

Syed Maaz Hasan

~ Alumna of The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange & Study (YES) Program, New Delhi



Today I see myself as someone who is full of hope with a vision for my future. While participating in the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program in the U.S. in 2013-14 made me connect better with people from different countries, this program has inculcated in me the ability to introspect, reflect and communicate in a creative manner.

Namgyal Tsekey

~ Alumna of Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP), Dharamsala



The *I Have a Dream* program pushed me to discover my inner self, articulate my thoughts and further put them into action. I was constantly reminded and made to believe by the facilitators that my past experiences are my assets and would add perspective to whatever I intend to undertake in the future.

Prachi Agarwal

~ Alumna of Space Camp Program, Kolkata



The concept of the 5th Space and how youngsters relate to society stayed with me. It also made me realize if we have the intent to help then no constraint can possibly discourage us. If we think we need a lot of money to help others, we are wrong. It doesn't require much money but a strong desire to help someone.

Sakina S. Vakanerwala

~ Alumna of Community College Initiative Program (CCIP), Pune



Activities like Trust-fall made me realize how in order to succeed, it is important to be able to trust others. The exercise of sitting in circles and drawing opened us to sharing our personal experiences, pains and dreams. The best part of the workshop was how safe we all felt opening up with everybody.

[During the opening workshop of the *I Have a Dream* program], we were given a chart to write down what was blocking us from pursuing our dreams. That very act of writing it down on the chart paper made me realize my inner ability and inner self. The opening workshop gave me confidence and propelled me from thoughts into action.

Shanchui Marchang

~ Alumna of Near-East and South Asia Undergraduate Exchange Program (NESA-UGRAD), New Delhi



My project did not conclude with the closing workshop; my mentor and I are actively in touch, and he advises me and my team regularly on strategic and legal issues. We have a long way to go and I see my mentor at every step in this journey.



Vinay Kumar

~ Alumna of Community College Initiative Program (CCIP), New Delhi

Zainab Shoeb Samad

~ Alumna of Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders (SUSI), Hyderabad



We keep telling ourselves stories of wanting to do things for the world, but through the "5 Whys" exercise, I realised it finally boils down to myself, and what gives me happiness. I was shocked to learn my dream was for my satisfaction, and not out of some kind of altruistic concern.



Zenith Lairikyengbam

~ Alumna of Community College Initiative Program (CCIP), Imphal

As an outcome of the program, I started my own organization, Next Generation Technotone, with the mission to make Manipur an unemployment-free state. My initial plan was to provide livelihood options for 100-200 people. Before participating in this program my project was just an idea on paper; this program propelled me into action and also helped me realize it.