

NERA
GAON
MERI
DUNIA

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AINA DEKHO

IMPACT REPORT



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What are we about

ABOUT AAINA DEKHO



Aaina Dekho is a 6-day residential program for youth empowerment and leadership training. The program has been designed to nurture the leadership quality of the individuals by sailing through a journey of self awareness through rural immersion.

We look at community understanding through immersion as a tool to be able to adopt and practice the values of empathy, acceptance, listening and compassion. It is 'value-based living' the idea rests upon.

We welcome applications from different parts of the country to ensure a culturally diverse cohort to maximise the impact of learning in the program. Through this, we aim to bring together varied world-views that on such a platform not only build on each other's strengths but create a safe ground for acceptance of each other's vulnerabilities. The connection with self and with others made in such an environment is nurturing.

We at Aaina Dekho strongly believe in the flow of the process and not the outcomes. The program has a comprehensively planned 6-day structure which takes the participants on an experiential journey of exploring self and creating an appropriate environment to be able to nurture the leader in every individual. The residential nature of the program is planned to be conducive enough to create an environment for living the values, planned enough to experience the impact and long enough to see rudimentary level of shift.

The platform becomes all-the-more impactful when the real world leaders in the social sector provide appropriate scaffolding to bring life to the leader in you. Aaina Dekho offers leadership sessions with the emerging leaders in India to maximise the participants' learning through their life journeys. The opportunities for personal conversations provide another space for hand-holding and a key to achieve clarity to move to action.



WHO WE ARE?

Mera Gaon Meri Dunia (MGMD) organisation is an alliance of young minds to build a world based on the core values of compassion, empathy, listening and trust . We work on rural transformation through youth empowerment. Here, we believe that community mobilisation is crucial to bring a sustainable change.

Aaina Dekho is an initiative by MGMD and commences its origin from the belief in the youth empowerment through a journey of self-awareness.

OUR TEAM



Nageshwar Panchal is a young entrepreneur from Indore. He has started "Mera Gaon Meri Dunia" to build sustainability in village through decentralize module of leadership and service. He has been among the founder members of Go-On India and Sanima. He is among the first cohort of School for social entrepreneurs India. He is also the part of world's largest train journey "Jagruti Yatra" to build India through enterprise.

Nageshwar has been heading a school transformation project in collaboration with Parwarish, a NGO based in Delhi, Smile Foundation and Gramin Vikas Samiti centre. Through his intensive work with different stakeholders in the educational institution, he has been able to facilitate an annual academic growth of the center by 130 percent and achieved a 100 percent recommendation by the teachers for the School Transformation Programme.



Kamlesh Mali is a young change-maker from Ujjain. He is currently working with "Mera Gaon Meri Dunia". He is also working in education sector on Value Based Education with "Labhya Foundation", in Delhi and "Parwarish Cares Foundation" on a campaign for Eradication of Sexual Abuse named Aao Baat Karein. Along with working in development sector he is pursuing his graduation from University of Delhi. He also spends his time in writing poems, stories and articles on relative issues around the region and country as well.



Lalit Pandya is a young enthusiast from Ujjain and is currently working with Mera Gaon Meri Dunia. He has been a part of a rural immersion program held by Youth Alliance named Gramya-Manthan in 2017. He is contributing his time and efforts in rural development and is eager to work in the educational reformation. He has completed his graduation in B.Sc (PCM) along with three year NCC program (C&B Certificate) from Ujjain. Presently, he is In-charge of Project Navodaya run by MGMD, to train students of 5th class for the entrance exam of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya.



WHO WE ARE?



Pawan Panchal is an I-discover fellow, and currently working in Kotra, Udaipur with a tribal school and community to uplift the social and emotional learning of school-going students. He did his schooling from Nagda and had worked in an ITI firm at Gurgaon for 7 months. He loves reading, writing and playing frisbee. Besides this, he has an expertise in community engagement and mobilization.



Vasudha Kapoor is a Post Graduate and a gold medalist in Human Development and Childhood Studies from the University of Delhi. She has an immense academic interest in gender and human development and is passionate about empowering youth and discovering sustainable solutions for problems that restricts people's potential. She has a prior experience of counseling with children and adolescents, developing play-centric educative approaches, workshop leading and qualitative research. She has worked towards building structures to empower children in correctional settings in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh, sex workers in Delhi and children residing in slum settings of central Delhi. She has closely worked with Save the Children, Delhi State Office to understand social upliftment initiatives of the organization through photo documentation of various functional programmes. Being from Mandi, a small town in Himachal Pradesh, the essence of life in hills is inalienable from her thoughts.



Piyush Porwal is a post graduate in social work from Indore. He had been working as a Block Officer in Educate girls NGO in Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh. He had been actively involved in empowering the field coordinators so that they could implement the capacity building program on field. Piyush has also been part of a rural immersion program held by Youth Alliance named Gramya Manthan in December, 2017. He has also interned with Indore Diocese Social Service Society and Catalysts for Social action, Indore.



Gurleen was born in small village of Punjab, with an open space in her heart for all the beings. She is currently pursuing B.com in Amritsar. She is committed to make her physical health and emotional well being important and worthy of appreciation. She pursues her regime of health and fidelity to her deepest values vigorously not only for herself but also to make the world a better place.



Deepti Mirani is an MBA (HR) graduate and has worked for 3 years as an HR professional before joining Parwarish as a Teacher Coach. She has a rich experience of working closely with educators, teachers and children over past 3.9 years through Parwarish. She is a trained professional and is responsible for conducting workshops and training sessions with school principals, teachers, parents and children of all age groups. She has been involved in yearlong Teachers Empowerment Program (TEP) and has impacted schools like Shirdi Sai Baba School (Saidham) and Neev, and is currently supervising two schools under same project. Through her meticulous efforts she has been able to bring a paradigm shift in the daily operations and study patterns at a very grass root level of these schools. Deepti is also heading the Aao Baat Karein Campaign, through which till now 27000+ children and 4500 teachers and parents have been educated and empowered about their bodies and protection against sexual abuse.

Where do we work?

The first edition of the programme was planned to be commenced near the rural areas surrounding Mahidpur Tehsil of Ujjain district namely; Jhutawad, Devli and Ilyakhedi. The villages are situated 25km away from sub-district headquarter Mahidpur and 81km away from district headquarter Ujjain.

Jhutawad is a beautiful village surrounded by *Imli* trees. Langoors and dancing peacocks can be easily spotted in the vicinity. The population of each village is around 1,000 and most of the people are engaged in the agriculture sector. The primary means of livelihood of the people in the three villages is agriculture, animal husbandry and daily-wage jobs.

The distinctive collective culture of the villages makes them an ideal venue for Aaina Dekho. The villages are vibrant in the indigenous traditions and cultures and were presumed suitable enough to provide alternative realities of existence for the metropolitan youth.



Why Aaina Dekho?



We believe in the idea that everyone has a capacity to be remarkable. There are different forms of capitals and due to ever rising growth of capitalism, we tend to miss out on the other forms excluding money like time, trust, compassion, psychological well-being, etc. In this current culture, we are being disconnected from the self and from the society. When we are disconnected from self we lose the awareness and when we are disconnected from society we lose the power of community.

AAINA DEKHO provides a platform to understand self through service and rural immersion. It can be perceived as an opportunity to see and practice the values like compassion, empathy and trust. When we resonate with the identity and the values then we become more aware about our choices.

We are not living in the society where we need one leader to follow, but we need to find the leader within to build the humanity on this planet.



Our process

The core of Aaina Dekho lies in the process, taking a moment at a time. This makes giving attention to the details an intricate part of the program. The 6-day residential program structure is carefully designed around the adoption and practice of the core values of empathy, compassion, listening, trust and gratitude.

Aaina Dekho is all about co-creation of an environment that nurtures the leader in you. The program structure revolves around self-development and awareness. We consider **rural immersion** and **service** an important medium to understand self by building connection with the unknown. By immersion, we mean becoming situated and located in the context. The understanding of an unfamiliar culture and community is supposed to bring to surface the aspects of one's self that deals with uncertainty, aspects that cease one to trust the unknown and the perceptions and stereotypes that colour one's vision..

Being a residential program, it provides enough time to build an atmosphere around the core values that is likely to last. Right from the early morning pre-sunset gathering to the conversations over dinner, the program environment is scheduled in such a way that the expression, creation and reflection pay regard to the values that are, seemingly, a way to the world peace.



UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF AINA DEKHO

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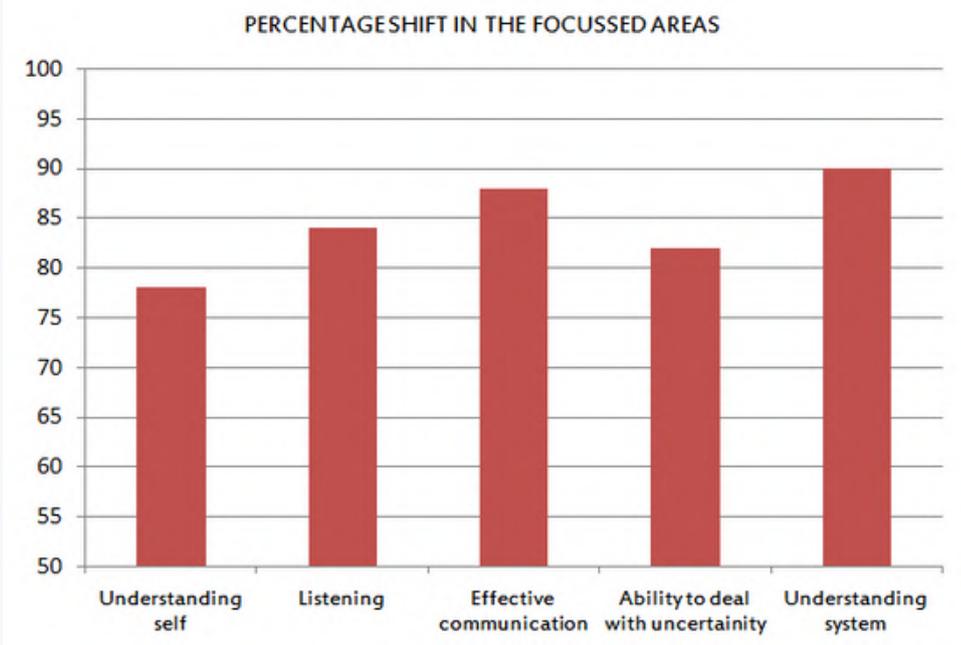


Fig 1: Percentage shift in the focused area of the program

The program reported considerable amount of the shift in the areas of focus for leadership training of the youth who participated in Aaina Dekho. Participants reported a 78 percent shift in the area of 'understanding of self' on an average. As high as 84 percent shift was reported in the 'ability of listening' of the participants. Fortunately enough, the program reported an 82 percent shift in the ability of dealing with uncertainty of participants. The program impact was seen across the following parameters.

BUILDING CONNECTION WITH SELF

Aaina Dekho came into conception as a journey of self discovery. To be able to build a connection with self to understand oneself in form of capabilities, desires, interest and way of being has been a crucial objective of the whole program. Through this journey, 54.55 percent of the participants reported a huge shift in their understanding of self and a 45.45 percent reported a moderate shift. Most candidates could use acceptance as a tool- acceptance for self in a situation where performance didn't match the expectations and all together could create a space of trust where the other feels accepted.

UNDERSTANDING SELF

In this journey, most participants could identify the labels they have put on self and others and started working towards dropping them. This created an idea of limitless self and for more than 90 percent of the participants the understanding of their capabilities in a difficult situation changed manifold.





MANAGING ONE'S EMOTIONS

Participants were taken on a journey to understand their needs and feelings . 73 percent candidates reported that they experienced a huge shift in their ability of expressing and understanding expression. A space for authentic expression of emotions and nurturance of acceptance towards them was a ground that Aaina Dekho created for the emotional development of the candidates.

EXPERIMENTING WITH ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

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EMOTIONAL GROWTH CHART

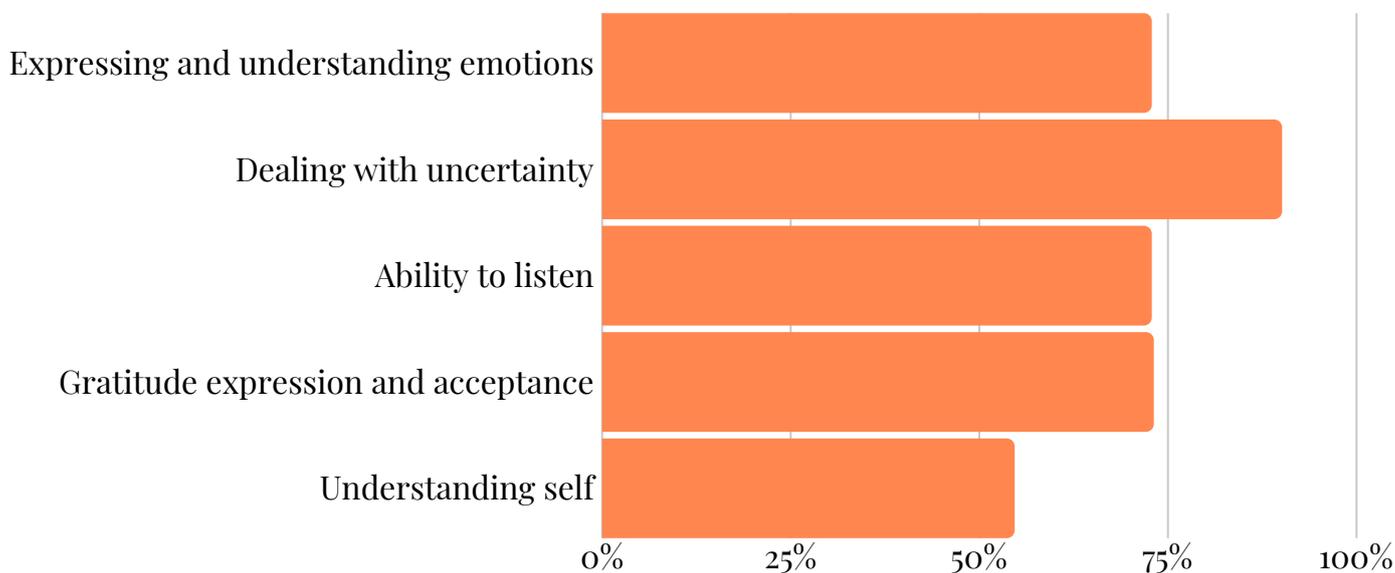


Fig2: Percentage of participants reporting a 'huge shift' in the stated domains of emotional development

CONNECTING WITH THE UNKNOWN

Rural immersion was a crucial part of the program in order to ensure that the participants get an opportunity to understand the community they visit. The program calls for the participants to blend into native or alien subculture groups by unobtrusive strategies. This understanding is based on the acceptance of the unfamiliar. The process is intricately adorned with the virtues of listening and service.

Interestingly, more than half (69%) of the participants, in their state of immersion to the community, could hold a collective perspective regarding the capital they had access to,

and were overwhelmed with a feeling of abundance. This opportunity, to be able to see the whole over the part, gave a sense of empowerment and emancipation to each individual.

Majorly, all the participants could acknowledge and accept alternative realities of existence which immensely fed into their understanding of diversity of notions regarding livelihood, culture, health, economy and beliefs related to gender, caste, class, education etc. More than broadening their horizons to deal with the unfamiliar, the understanding of their capability of service to the unknown made their acceptance of their own selves deeper and more profound.

More than 90 percent improved decision-making in the time of uncertainty

Almost all participants also felt that they found themselves psychologically more flexible in acceptance of an uncertain circumstance. The fluidity in their decision making in such a situation also reported to experience a considerable shift. A few participants took back that in order to establish trust with the unknown, conversation and personal sharing is necessary. Most participants (83%) reported that they could practice the values of empathy, listening and compassion while they interacted with the native community. Almost half of the participants also showed an increased acceptance of self as they reflected that they would be more kind to the self and would let go off the burden of unrealistic expectations.





We aim to create a shift from consumption to contribution, transaction to trust, scarcity to abundance, and isolation to community – Service Space

The session of service practice was rated 4.9 on a scale of 5 on an average.

After the program, all the participants reported that they could better understand and live the idea of service. As they got opportunities to serve and receive service, they reported a personal growth by being able to accept service which nurtured their capability to serve themselves.

DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

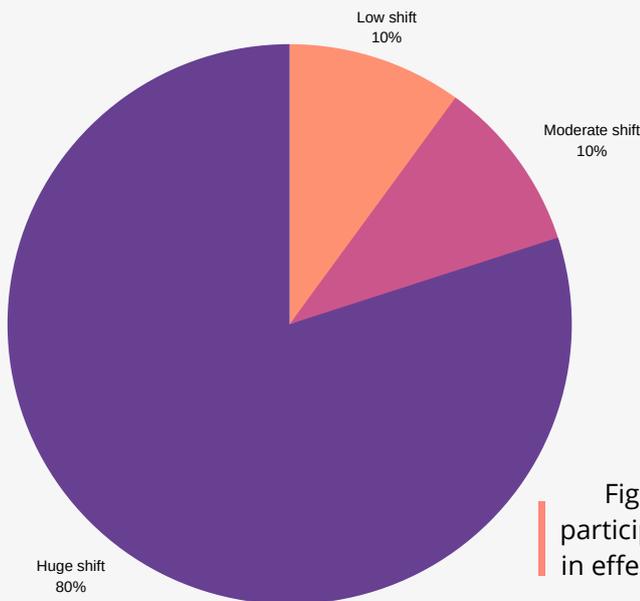


Fig 3: Percentage of participants reporting shift in effective communication

As much as 72.73 percent participants reported that they have experienced a huge shift in their ability to express their perspective and understand the needs of the other person.

Almost all the participants reported that their ability to have an effective communication has increased after being a part of the process of the program. A shift in focus from reaction to reflection has been an important aspect of this process. Reflection helps the individuals to give time to differentiate reality from perception and experimenting with alternative perspectives. It also gives more time to be able to empathise with the other person and focus on the 'needs' of self and the other person rather than 'feelings'.



UNDERSTANDING SYSTEMS AND POWER OF AN INDIVIDUAL



MORE THAN 90 PERCENT PARTICIPANTS COULD SEE THEMSELVES AS A PART OF A LARGER SYSTEM AND BECAME MORE AWARE IN THE WAY THEIR INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS IMPACTED THE LARGER ENVIRONMENT.

We at Aaina Dekho see an individual inseparable from its environment. The larger systems we work in become crucial to be understood when development of self is in question. In the process of the program, we have adopted a 'System-thinking' approach from Gramya Manthan (an initiative by Youth Alliance, an NGO based in Delhi). Through the process, all of the participants could see how linked we are in the community and how important it is to make conscious choices.

DEVELOPING EMPATHY

GOING THROUGH THE PROCESS, PARTICIPANTS COULD SEE THE VALUE OF EMPATHY AS WAY TO LEAD SELF AND OTHERS AROUND THEM.



All the participants stated that the prevailing diversity in the society appeared more vividly during different learning experiences in the program. In order to live in the larger system, one requires empathy to become more conscious of their choices. Most participants could go beyond the stereotypes they attached with a social identity and could see them as complete people with stories not-known to them.

MOST PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCED A MORE THAN 80 PERCENT SHIFT IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF EMPATHY.

MEETING OVERARCHING YOUTH LEADERS

Modeling a value based life:

Dev Tayde

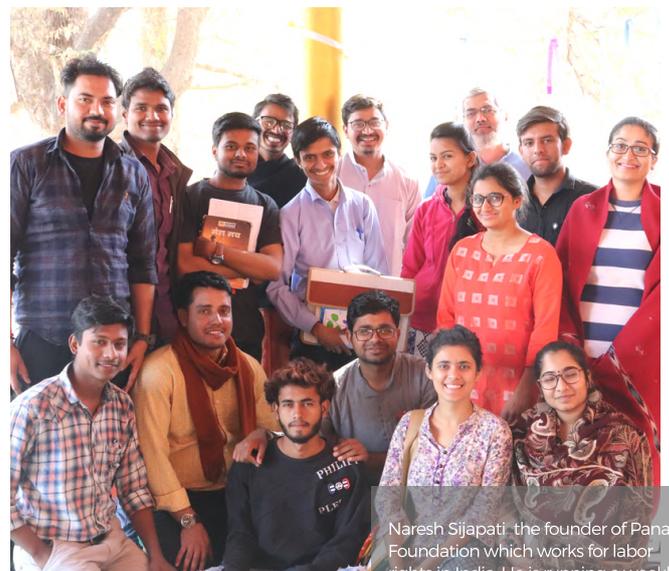
Just by living with Dev Bhaiya (as most of us at Aaina Dekho call him) participants could vividly see how resolute practice can make us consistent in service. Sustainability is a slow process of change. He has a personality which absorbs the concepts with their utmost deepness and the seemingly-difficult questions were answered with a miraculous simplicity. With his presence participants were able to identify the extent to which they able to connect with the rural community and how to absorb the idea of service in our routines. When one starts to live certain values, its manifestation can be easily seen in his/her life.



Dev Tayde is a mentor to social enterprises and also runs an intensive fellowship called Anant-Zameer. He carries a decade of experience of low cost housing, sanitation, community development and education.

Being the last pebble to the thirsty crowd: Naresh Sijapati's Story of unending determination

Naresh came out to be the perfect example of how to make the best out of the available situation and never lose hope. It came out clearly that small steps can have an immeasurable. At Aaina Dekho, we tried to make the participants explore their potential and Naresh contributed immensely by communicating his idea of focusing on the intention and purpose. Many of us who felt that struggles were putting them down felt motivated to gather their inner light.



Naresh Sijapati, the founder of Panah Foundation which works for labor rights in India. He is running a weekly newspaper from Ahmedabad, called Panah Times

MEETING OVERARCHING YOUTH LEADERS

A day with the Madman of India: Swapnil Tewari

Swapnil's session was all about learning to convert even our weakness into our strength, accepting ourselves, and adopting concrete skills to trust our capabilities. The interaction could create among the youth that they were 'born wonders', 'heroes' of their lives. The participants experienced a considerable jump in their self esteem by not only seeing, but accepting self in the mirror shown by Mr. Tewari to them. His anecdotal sharing of his rehabilitating work with tribal communities of Orissa and other parts of the country seemed powerful to bring youth to action.

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In this world, it is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich.

HENRY WARD BEECHER



Swapnil Tewari is a social entrepreneur, rover, inventor, linguist, writer, and founder of "Livemad", a movement that spreads hope in troubled communities through social inventions, entrepreneurship, and love. currently the UNESCO Ambassador for SDG Inclusive Learning-2017/18

TESTIMONIALS



As I was going to the village, I had a lot of assumptions and doubts in my mind. But the atmosphere I got there was very different from what I had imagined. It took a few moments to form a bond.

-Pratibha, Participant Aaina Dekho

It was remarkable to know that I can serve even when I am feeling the weakest. I don't have to reach anywhere to be able to serve.

-Manjiri, Participant Aaina Dekho

I have never been a very good listener. Aaina Dekho made me understand the value of my ears.

-Vijay, Participant Aaina Dekho

Aaina Dekho is a program internationally thought out and locally executed.

-Swapnil, Youth Leader, Aaina Dekho



We cleaned the major public areas of the village. Though it was monotonous and appeared as a massive task once I get into it, I was felt more concerned that in a wish to give something we do not take away the other. It, thus became important to us to ensure that the waste collected was dumped in a safe place.

-Kamlesh, Team member Aaina Dekho

Being from the same region and the same school where AD commenced, I always thought that it should happen somewhere else because the place has always reminded me of my weaknesses. As I took off the labels that restricted me since ages, the moment became the most powerful for me.

-Santosh, Participant Aaina Dekho



Conclusions and Considerations

Aaina Dekho has been a journey of self development for a diversified youth. Aaina Dekho functioned as a platform to empower future leaders to lead a value-based life which has empathy, compassion, trust and sharing at its core. A high proportion of the participants reported a growth in self understanding. Also, most participants could develop skills for effective communication through the tools or acceptance and listening. Moreover, the idea of empathy as an inseparable aspect of leadership was established throughout the process.

For us, every single life matters. So, creating even one empathetic leader throughout the program who is conscious of his/her choices and welcomes uncertainty with open arms is what we call success. We strongly believe that individuals are immensely powerful and have innumerable ways to impact the reality they function in.



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