



ALUMNI STORIES

Alumni Stories credit

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Dear Readers,

Fifteen enthusiastic student volunteers from the MA Education and M.A. Development, Class of 2017-19 set out this winter, to profile our Alumni in locations across the country. They caught up with Alumni in Almora, Bangalore, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar, Dhamtari, Dharwad, Delhi, Dineshpur, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Raipur and Udaipur.

This project brought together several aspects that went beyond the story; interaction with Alumni at their work place helped current students visualize possible future careers and contextualize their education at Azim Premji University. Alumni themselves, were delighted to get a first-hand account of what's happening at the University. We hope to facilitate more such connects in future that bring us closer.

Featuring here, 12 Alumni Stories which are short extracts from the stories our first years wrote. This gives us a glimpse of what our Alumni is engaged with today. We will keep adding to this collection.

Ending with a big shout out to the team of student volunteers - your enthusiasm made this possible! And to Rahul Rai, our Designer who has burnt the midnight oil to bring this booklet together.

To our Alumni out there, thank you for sharing, your stories do us proud.

Warm regards,

Padma Nayar

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2014-16

M.A. Education

Alumni Stories

“

I have always wanted to work in a place where the need was the greatest, because that would give me the greatest satisfaction.”



Ankita Thakur

Ankita Thakur graduated from Azim Premji University with a degree in M.A. in Education and currently works in a residential school managed by an organisation called Parivaar, in a semi-rural area, little away from the main city of Kolkata in West Bengal.

The residential school where Ankita is working, aims at providing education to children from economically under-privileged backgrounds

for free. Around 75% of the children come from the tribal villages.

She has worked extensively in designing and developing curriculum for English and Hindi across the grades and has also worked on providing academic support to the teachers through workshops which she conducts every month.

“

When you're in the field of social change, every decision you make shapes your life. You will find a way to systematically solve every obstacle if you have a true desire to bring about change.”



Rashid AP

Rashid is engaged in a variety of interventions which makes him a multitasker. He is interested in the areas of Human rights, sexuality and gender, LGBTQIA rights and issues of sex workers. He has been successful in engaging in dialogue with the LGBTQIA community, helping them find their voice and creating a platform for formal employment. His current work is an intervention to make cost effective sanitary napkins production units.

He says, “It is an initiative to improve health status of the adolescent girls and women, generate livelihood means in rural areas by establishing low cost sanitary napkins”. Rashid is the co-founder and Director at Sarva Samnvaya Samathaa, Bangalore since Sept 2017 and manages all administrative affairs, leads project planning, implementation & monitoring and coordinates the fundraising activities.

2012-14

M.A. Education

Alumni Stories

“

Azim Premji University has made life difficult because one cannot simply take things for granted anymore. I question everything I see around, which I rarely did before joining the course.”



Vijitha Rajan

Vijitha is pursuing a PhD in Education from Central Institute of Education, Delhi. Her research is an attempt to “understand experiences of people who are unheard and unseen.” Her current doctoral research has led her to problematize questions that foreground the education of migrant children. Engaging both conceptually and empirically with the constructs of migration, childhood and education has compelled her to ask fundamental questions on childhood and education in an Indian context.

What does Education mean to the lives of migrant children? Can the current development and education discourses in the country take into account the lived realities of poor migrant families and children? How does one understand the notions of educational access, quality and equity in the context of migrant children’s lives? In addition, Vijitha has co-founded Reach India Foundation, a Non-Governmental Organization working in the education space of Wayanad, Kerala.

“

I am leading a more minimalistic life now but I feel it is more balanced, and I feel happier.”



P Pranavi

Pranavi spearheads two projects at SAFA, Hyderabad. Her project on sustainable menstrual hygiene is in collaboration with the University of Liverpool. Coverage by the local news, including an appearance by her on a segment to discuss about the 'Padman challenge' and safe menstrual practices speak volumes of her contribution.

She also works on creating learning spaces for school dropouts

and disadvantaged children in slums. Pranavi's work in slums has enabled her to witness inequalities that exist in society at close quarters, inequalities she feels that we (privileged) are also responsible for perpetuating. The thing that brings her joy is working with the local community and how she has gained acceptance amongst them. She commends the emphasis on practical learning and internships at University that helped her identify her passion.

“

Trusting the teacher and making him/her feel that there is autonomy to create whatever magic they want to is essential.”



Vinay Nadgir

Mallasajjan English Medium High school is a beautiful progressive learning space in Dharwad. Vinay Nadgir, our alumnus leads this school that was first given shape by his grandfather during the Freedom struggle as Mallasajjan Vyayam Shala, his belief being that physical culture of the young citizens of independent India is paramount and Malla (strong) Sajjan (virtuous) young people is the kind of young person India needs in its nation-building. Vinay is keeping his vision alive - children at the school thrive in sport and deeply enjoy it, be it badminton, basketball, football or even

Malkham! What started out as a space devoted solely to Physical education, is now a school for roughly 900 children from LKG right upto Class X.

As Principal of a large school, Vinay faces myriad challenges. There is always something or the other that needs urgent attention, but he works with calm and sensibility showing great sensitivity towards the team he works with, be it the children or the staff.

2014-16

M.A. Development

Alumni Stories

“

When you have to make sudden decisions on the field then the only support is what you learned at University.”



Anshul Bhatt

Anshul Bhatt works as the Programme Associate at Seva Mandir for the Women and Child Development Programme at the block level in Udaipur. She chose to become a Development professional so that she could work with people on their issues rather than working just sitting in front of the computer.

Initially, she started working on funding, proposals and budgets, but her interest in the subject of women and gender, took her to

the Women and Child Development unit at the block level. Here, she works on two programmes - the Kindergarten programme which includes work with preschool education of children, malnutrition and child development. There are a total of 24 kindergartens that are covered under this programme. She also devotes time to issues related to the prevention of domestic violence in the Women's Resource Centre at Seva Mandir.

“

The crux of this programme lies in getting people to understand that this project is centered on their participation. The answers have to come from them, the community, not us.”



Sukrit Nagpal

Sukrit works at Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), Delhi where he looks after the implementation of the ‘Engaged Citizens Responsive City’ programme. This four-year intervention focusses on strengthening civil society of the urban poor to participate in the planning and monitoring of sanitation services in Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur.

Sukrit and his team engage with urban poor in roughly 250 slums

in the 3 cities through capacity building activities to enable them to become active citizens, and use these skills at the level of planning and monitoring of sanitation services. They organize people in Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs) in each of these informal settlements and train young men and women to take on leadership roles, and at the same time mobilize multiple stakeholders such as the Municipalities to become more responsive to the needs of the community.

2013-15

M.A Development

Alumni Stories

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It is important to serve, learn and lead; It means being sensitive to the hardships of the neediest around me, learning every day from those whom we serve, and doing more meaningful work for them."



Rachel Varghese

After working as a news editor for nearly eight years, Rachel Varghese, Azim Premji University's alumna from 2013-15 Batch, decided to break the routine and immerse herself in the world of social development. She completed the M.A. Development programme with a specialization in Law and Governance. During the course and even after, Rachel has worked largely with women and children, in Hyderabad, Odisha and Mumbai. After the course, she worked as the William J Clinton Fellow with My Choices Foundation

in Hyderabad where she set up Saath-Saath, a support group for domestic violence survivors. She designed a 3-year programme for the support group.

Post the 10-month Fellowship, she joined The Aangan Trust and worked in the rural belt of Orissa as a Programme Manager for their projects on child protection in that State. She aims to combine her interests in public health and gender to work for those in need.

“

Change cannot be initiated at a massive scale without the support of the government.”



Mukesh Kumar

Mukesh, a science enthusiast and a practitioner at heart, is carrying forward his love for science by creating spaces for children at Government Schools to freely ask and experiment the “How?” and “Why?” After graduation, Mukesh realized the gap between the demand for quality education and what was actually being experienced on ground, in classrooms. He worked with Azim Premji Foundation as a resource person for 2 years where he developed an Academic Leadership Model, after which he joined Agasthya International Foundation, Gurugram.

Working as a Regional Head for North India, based in Gurugram, Mukesh is trying to ignite the spark within children to explore and experiment with the world of science by setting up science labs for hands on experience, holding science exhibitions and running mentorship programmes in Government schools, in partnership with the State Government and interested Corporates. In this little span of time, Mukesh has succeeded in partnering with 4 Corporates for funding Science labs. He has also introduced projects of a similar nature in other States by expanding his team.

2014-16

M.A. Development

Alumni Stories

“

To be social change agents one needs to open oneself up to look for multiple narratives and find inspiration from everyone around.”



Anu Mishra

After graduation, Anu Mishra began her first job with an anti-human trafficking organization. Currently, she works with 3 shelter homes in Kolkata. The survivors of human trafficking are often limited in their ideas of a future especially as regards what vocation they could pursue. While their dreams and aspirations continue to be vibrant, the brutalities that impact their childhood leave deep scars and affect their ability to re-adjust to mainstream society. These shelter home are visualised as a springboard for transformation in the lives of survivors.

Towards steering survivors of human trafficking into mainstream professions, Anu works on building a foundation course for these girls which includes life-skills, trauma counselling, functional literacy, communicative English, basic IT skills and personality development. Also, being part of rescues, post rescue child care process is a central element of Anu's day to day work. Anu is encouraged by seeing the impact of her work on the lives of actual human beings, not only for the short term but over a very long time.

“

I had a major reality check after I graduated – the real world so to speak, outside of Azim Premji University was quite a different scene. Public health was more demanding in ways I had not thought.”



N R Shrish

Like any ambitious, young computer science graduate, Shrish completed his degree and went headlong into a job in IT. Come 2010, Shrish took the bold move of taking a year off, to do ground-work on how to set up a school. He got involved with Karnataka Health Systems Development and Reforms Project (KHS DRP), sponsored by World Bank, which exposed him to some of the issues and difficulties people face in their everyday lives, and he wanted to do something about it, through education. It was then that he came across Azim Premji University.

Currently, Shrish and his partner, have developed ‘Ideas Unbound’, an innovative development initiative, which enables efficient collection of data from the village level, in a minimum period of time. This reduces dependence on local Governments, or any other institutions that take a sizeable time to collect and process data. Ideas Unbound helps to collect the required information quickly, accurately and effectively while involving people at the village level, so they understand the whys and hows behind the collection of information, and its importance.

“

"My roommate had told me that I lived in the library more than at the hostel!"



S Naimathullah Faiyaz

Naimathullah Faiyaz works as Project Manager at SAFA, Hyderabad in the very area where he grew up. His 'office' is a centre for imparting vocational skills, mainly in sewing and tailoring, to single women.

Over the course of time at the University, Faiyaz had the opportunity to work with organizations focusing on women and also to apply

what he had learnt in understanding the issues in his hometown. When offered an opportunity as Project Manager, SAFA Hyderabad, he saw this as a natural progression.

At present, he handles projects which are geared towards providing sustainable livelihood options to single women households in South Hyderabad.

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humane and sustainable society