

THE DESH APNAYEN

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | OCTOBER 2022

Creating alert, informed and active citizens for a better India



FROM THE FOUNDER'S DESK

We set up Desh Apnayan Sahayog Foundation in 2015 with a deep desire to help create Democracy 2.0 for the nation. **India is the world's largest democracy, but what can we as citizens do to make it the world's best democracy?**

The answer lies in each one of us becoming an **ACTiZEN**. Citizens who are **Alert** about what is going on around us, **Inform** ourselves about the issues and solutions, and **Actively participate** in solving them, alone, in groups or alongside the government.

We believe that the young citizens of India hold the key to change with their innate curiosity, energy, and optimism. The Foundation has therefore chosen to work with these young citizens of India. Through a large number of activities with schools, Desh Apnayan has already started inculcating **ACTiZEN** values (**शिकायत नहीं, शुरूआत करो, Be Alert, Informed, and Active**) in students, teachers, and parents.

It is little wonder then that hundreds of schools across the country, both public and private, have joined hands with us to form The ACTiZENS' Club. Student members of the Club take part in innovative activities every month based on themes that are aligned to civic and social issues and the feedback has been heartening and humbling.

We are happy to offer our programmes to many more schools at absolutely no cost because we believe that we can do it! India is marching forward, and we can collectively take our country to new heights and co-create Democracy 2.0.

After all, individually we might fail, but together, we always win!



Mr. Vallabh Bhanshali is a thought leader, a businessman, a devoted Vipassana meditator, and a philanthropist. He co-founded Enam Securities, a highly reputed investment banking and investment group. He is also the founder of Satya Vigyan Foundation and the co-founder of Indian School of Public Policy and FLAME University.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The beginning of the academic year 2022-23 has been truly remarkable for all of us at Desh Apnayan with many milestones achieved by our team. We successfully partnered with the **Directorate of Education and State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) Goa** through an MoU, to offer The ACT*ZENS*' Club programme to 77 public schools in Goa.

Apart from this, we inaugurated a batch in 20 CBSE-affiliated schools of our new partner, **Karnatak Lingayat Education Society**. We also started a pilot with **15 public schools in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh** with the intention of scaling up over time. Amidst all of this, we continued running our programme in **a number of private schools** of various boards across the country.

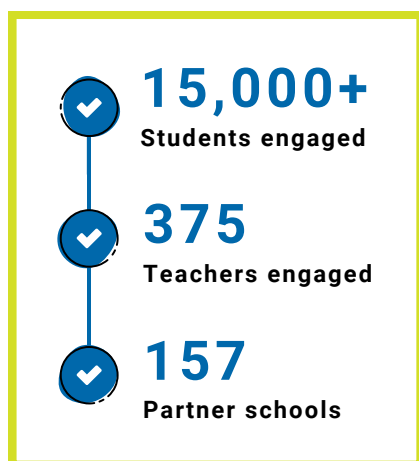
While our flagship programme has been touching the lives of thousands of students, via the monthly activities, we felt a strong need to curate a new set of opportunities for students so that they step out of their 'comfort zones' and gain sharper insights, experientially. Ergo, we experimented with a new idea, **The ACT*ZEN* Leadership Lab**, for students who were willing to commit to work on a civic action project in their neighbourhood and attend weekly mentoring sessions on Sundays for six months.

Another new endeavour at our end is to publish a quarterly periodical.

OUR REACH (2022-23)

Presenting the numbers of our primary stakeholders:

The ACT*ZENS*' Club



The Desh Apnayan Newsletter intends to bring you the highlights, updates, and some heart touching stories of change related to the organisation's activities from the previous quarter. As you read on, you will learn more about The ACT*ZENS*' Club programme which is enabling 157 schools to take part in a range of activities.

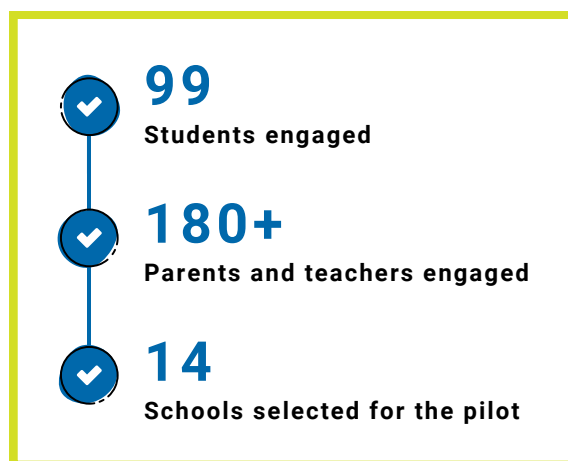
As we go forward, we are attempting to build a deeper relationship with you, our reader. While we celebrate our successes, we would also like to share with you the challenges we have faced along the way. Right from having to navigate the intricacies of the bureaucratic system, to meeting busy and hesitant teachers, we have seen a lot. Students who aspire for success have to struggle because of a lack of basic facilities such as access to smartphones, computers, the internet, etc.

What keeps us going is the resilience of these very students and parents, teachers, and principals who appreciate and support our work wholeheartedly. We are eager to see how the rest of the year unfolds and hope to overcome any challenges that come our way, together and through your support.

Please read through this newsletter and share with us your feedback, ideas, and any ACT*ZEN* stories you come across, at editor@deshapnayan.org.

Come, join the movement!

The ACT*ZEN* Leadership Lab



THE ACT*i*ZENS' CLUB



Club activity in action



Club members showcasing handmade ballot boxes

The ACT*i*ZENS' Club, our flagship initiative, offers **monthly thematic activities based on civic and social issues** to students across the country.

These activities are **designed and contextualised to cater to students at two levels** - Level 1 (grades 6 and 7) and Level 2 (grades 8 and 9). Each school forms a Club with its own President and Vice-President elected by the members at the beginning of the academic year.

Club members develop **21st-century skills** while becoming Alert, Informed and Active Citizens of India. They get a chance to express and hone their leadership skills. The teachers in charge guide the office-bearers to lead Club activities and encourage students to participate actively. They are also instrumental in the Club formation process.

We have partnered with the Governments of Goa and Madhya Pradesh to offer The ACT*i*ZENS' Club programme to students in public schools. In the past, we have also partnered with over 900 private schools following the CBSE, ICSE and state boards across several states. Our expansion to the state of MP this year has taken our programme to students in grades 9 and 11. The activities are delivered to them in Hindi.

Here is a brief overview of the last quarter:

JULY ACTIVITY

The Power of the Vote

Students conducted an election to better understand the electoral process, and the true strength that lies in voting and running for leadership. Office-bearers were elected by the Club members as a part of this fun-filled activity. Students designed ballot boxes and voter ID cards, and delivered speeches, among other tasks.

This activity is a common starting point for all the Clubs, in all the geographies where we are present. Thereafter, the monthly activities are customised keeping the audience in mind.

AUGUST ACTIVITIES

The Fundamental Quiz

A constitution is not a fixed set of rules and laws. It's an ever-evolving entity that is fundamental to every citizen's identity. So we organised an in-depth, research-based activity, and devised a quiz, for students to understand the nuances of the Indian Constitution. They were also provided with preparatory reading material about the lesser-known yet interesting facts about the Constitution.

Citizenship and Legal Identity

Through a role-play activity, students gained valuable information regarding legal documents and identity cards that an Indian citizen is required to have at different ages.

Engaging Young People in Politics

This activity aimed to deepen students' understanding of Indian politics. They formed their own political parties, discussed and designed manifestos, and elected their leaders. It was a fun re-enactment of the great Indian political system.



Club members displaying symbols and names of their political parties

SEPTEMBER ACTIVITIES

Share the Load

One of the most challenging realities of today is the unequal distribution of labour in a household. This activity helped students understand and evaluate the workload-distribution in their own families. The aim was to infuse a healthy sense of equality and interdependence to co-exist in peace and harmony.

Know Your Local Government

Many of the issues in a community are a result of ignorance regarding the appropriate authority responsible for resolving the problems. One of the ways to fix this is to engage proactively with the community and its leaders. This activity included a research project and role-play through which students learnt more about their local government and its functioning, and how citizens could collaborate with the government.



Club members presenting their election manifestos

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Students learnt about the passing of bills through a mock Parliament setup in the classroom, designed to stimulate the young minds. The activity included drafting of bills, along with a brief introduction to government websites to understand the process of taking feedback from citizens for the drafting. This was followed by a Q&A session.



As a result of having participated in The ACTiZENS' Club activity on elections, some of the students were so motivated that they **took up the task of visiting their neighbours, door-to-door, and requested all the adults to vote in the upcoming state elections.**



A teacher told us that she was very happy to see that some of her **students who seemed underconfident and not interested in academics are actively taking part in** The ACTiZENS' Club activities. She added that they never engaged in class before but seem to have now **rediscovered their voice.**

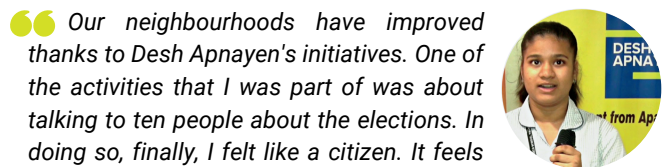


TESTIMONIALS



Desh Apnayan's ACTiZENS' Club makes efforts to build good citizens. Students learn by doing activities. They become aware of and sensitive to various issues. I encourage teachers to engage students and help them participate actively.

- Fr. Jude Fernandes S.J., Ex-principal, St. Mary's High School (SSC), Mumbai



Our neighbourhoods have improved thanks to Desh Apnayan's initiatives. One of the activities that I was part of was about talking to ten people about the elections. In doing so, finally, I felt like a citizen. It feels like I am a completely different person now.

- Ms. Khushi Mishra, Student, Lodha World School, Thane



Desh Apnayan's efforts have had a lot of impact on my child by making him an alert citizen. Seeing the neighbourhood makeover project that his school did, I can say my child is on the right path.

- Mr. Bhavesh Tailor, Parent

IMPACT REPORT FROM GOA

We commissioned Sattva Consulting to undertake a longitudinal impact evaluation study, comprising a baseline study (conducted in the months of June and July 2021) and an endline study (conducted in the months of January and February 2022) to gauge the impact created by The ACT/ZENS' Club programme on various stakeholders - students, teachers, headmasters, etc. in 76 public schools of Goa over the period of the academic year.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Students' rating on their **awareness of key civic themes** across a five-point scale showed that, from baseline to endline, their awareness of the key themes of the programme has improved considerably.

In the baseline analysis, 1% of the students had marked it as 'Excellent'. In the endline analysis, this number jumped to 12%.

84% students reported that they **built life skills** such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, etc.

55% students **started initiatives** such as waste segregation, cleaning areas around the school, and making others aware of issues like child marriage.

IMPACT ON TEACHERS

99% teachers reported that the programme has **improved their awareness** related to important civic themes.

97% teachers reported that they **learnt activities** that can improve leadership, communication, problem-solving and research skills among students.

90% teachers reported that they **learnt new teaching methods**.

A KEY MILESTONE

Our partnership with Goa schools emerged from our conversations with Mr. Nagaraj Honnekeri, Director, SCERT Goa, Dr. Gopal Pradhan and other officials from the SCERT and the Directorate of Education.



MoU signing with the SCERT Goa team

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to them for supporting us in various ways. They motivated the school headmasters and teachers to conduct the monthly activities and give us feedback, they encouraged our team with words of appreciation and new ideas.



Desh Apnayen mentioned on the SCERT Goa website

This year, Goa SCERT recognised us as a collaborator on their website. This is an important milestone for us as we lay the groundwork to expand our presence across different schools in India.

THE WAY FORWARD

The future of Desh Apnayen is ripe with energising possibilities. We are keen on scaling up by forging many more partnerships with government and non-government bodies so as to provide engaging opportunities to millions of young students in their communities.

We are also examining our programme design and content to contextualise it better for our diverse beneficiaries. While our aim is to create ACT/ZENS and we have a specific understanding of what makes an ACT/ZEN, we are ready to constantly evolve to meet each student where they are and help kickstart their journey towards becoming an ACT/ZEN.

We are also planning to launch pilot editions of our Volunteer Engagement Programme and Club Office-Bearers Engagement Programme in the coming months. Both these models are an attempt to increase the quality and sustainability of our flagship initiative in the long run at minimal costs.

We aim to prioritise the collection of stories of change as well, both to build a more robust reflection practice as well as to inspire people around us, so that each one of us takes the responsibility to help our nation be its best, greatest, most powerful self.

OUR TEAM



Desh Apnayen team members from Mumbai, Goa, Bhopal and Vadodara came together for an offsite recently. From Left to Right - Vinita Panwar, Gargi Sawant, Rajesh Nayak, Slaney Rodrigues, Rohit Goriwale, Urmila Joshi, Jitesh Shelke, Annapurna Tiwari, Daniel Gonsalves, Jignesh Killekar, Vallabh Bhanshali, Garima Tailang, Chandni Parekh, Tuleeka Moulik, Althea D'souza, Aasana Shah, Avinash Soni, Anurag Sharma, Nikhil Mhatre

We invite you to join hands with us!

THE DESH APNAYEN PLEDGE

आओ हम सब देश अपनायें,
“चलता है” को दूर भगायें,
भविष्य बचायें, भाग्य बनायें।

क्षणिक राष्ट्रीय भावना के आगे बढ़ें।
अगर हम नित्य देशहित के बारे में सोचें तो कठिन दिन देखने ही न पड़े!
क्या आप यह शपथ लेंगे? औरों को भी दिलाएँ।

भारत देश हमारा है, मेरा है, तुम्हारा है,
इसकी रक्षा-उन्नति में, भाग्य-विकास हमारा है।

अगर चाहे सुख-शान्ति और स्वइच्छा का जीवन,
जरूरी है हम सब पर, कर्तव्यों का भी पालन।

चुनें हम अच्छी सरकार, और दें उसे पूरा सहकार,
हो उचित तो करें विरोध, देशहित की यही पुकार।

वादों का सच्चा, हर काम हो अच्छा, ऐसा हो हमारा नाम,
पर अधिकार की रक्षा, दीन की सेवा, सर्वोपरि हमारा काम।

कोई करे या न करे, न्याय पालना मेरा धरम,
गंद नहीं, देर नहीं, ऐसे हो हमारे करम।

मेरा देश सबसे पुराना, फिर बनेगा राष्ट्र महान,
हम तुम नित्य बनें बेहतर; बेहतर, बेहतर और महान।

मेरा प्रान्त पूरब-पश्चिम, मेरा ही है उत्तर-दक्षिण,
देश की प्रगति मेरा ज़िम्मा, लेता हूँ ये प्रण-प्रतिक्षण।

जय हिंद। जय हिंद। जय हिंद।



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