Empowering Grassroots Leaders
Quest Fellowship Programme
Impact Report, 2013
Bridging gaps through partnership

Leaders’ Quest and CORO India are empowering grassroots leaders to generate creative solutions to big issues facing communities in India today.

The benefits of our deep partnership are significant. CORO India is a community-owned organisation, with 25 years’ experience working on holistic community development across Maharashtra. Leaders’ Quest is a social enterprise that works with leaders from all walks of life – from CEOs to grassroots organisers – who want to use their unique influence to create positive change in the world.

Together, we combine our unique networks and experience from across these diverse sections of society to transform marginalised communities through our Quest Fellowship Programme. It’s a pioneering and successful model that has garnered support from friends and funders all over the world – including a number in India.

On the following pages, we share the remarkable story of our engagement so far with grassroots leaders and their organisations (currently 195 CBOs across Maharashtra). Our Quest Fellows are tackling issues in their communities including security, women’s empowerment, access to education, sanitation, and combating violence against women. They have also united in local and state-wide campaigns to advocate for their rights and to raise greater awareness about their causes.

Over the next year, we’ll be scaling up our work in Rajasthan and Delhi, with the view to expanding nationally. We hope more individuals and organisations – from the boardroom to the grassroots – will join us on this journey towards sustainable change for Indian communities.

Sujata Khandekar (Co-Founder & Director, CORO)
Lindsay Levin (Managing Partner, Leaders’ Quest)

We’re proud to be supported by advisors in India, including Luis Miranda (Founder of IDFC Private Equity) and Gopal Jain (Founder and Managing Director of Gaja Capital Partners).

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What do we aim to achieve?

We envisage a society where grassroots leaders, regardless of their background, are recognised as powerful agents of change. Where they are fully supported by communities, government and the private sector, and where they play a pivotal role in the shift towards a more equal society, free from human-rights violations and discrimination.

Empowering grassroots leaders

Our Quest Fellowship Programme grows the capacity of grassroots leaders to drive sustainable social change. Quest Fellows adopt highly participatory approaches. They empower local communities, support grassroots organisations, and engage with public and private decision-makers. Through their individual and collective efforts, they lead significant change in their communities, as well as at policy level.

Well-attuned to local needs, our Quest Fellows work with their communities to identify and tackle the root causes of social inequality. They spearhead initiatives that generate livelihoods, provide access to education and sanitation, and reduce violence and gender discrimination.

“We are impressed by the work of the Quest Fellows, and are moved and enriched by the experience of engaging with them.”
Gopal Jain, Founder and Managing Director, Gaja Capital Partners
Why do we invest in grassroots leaders?

Local leaders understand the complexity of issues in marginalised communities, and can create holistic solutions that get to the root cause of problems. We seek out motivated, well-informed individuals with the potential to steer collective action and make a significant difference in their communities.

Grassroots leaders ...

...approach problems in highly practical ways
...understand community dynamics and power relationships
...voice the interests of marginalised people
...mobilise others to amplify the impact of their projects

Their potential to drive change is tremendous – but they often lack opportunities for training and education, and are unable to access networks and finance.

The Quest Fellowship Programme enables these individuals to take ownership of the challenges facing their communities.

“It’s humbling see the Quest Fellows work selflessly to improve their communities, often in the face of tough opposition. By partnering with these inspiring leaders, people from Indian companies get a better understanding of the challenges faced at the grassroots. We can help these fellows get exposure to a world beyond their community.”

Luis Miranda, Founder of IDFC Private Equity
Impact in numbers: what we’ve done so far

India 2008 – 2013

We’ve provided training, mentoring and support to 683 grassroots leaders, including 15 Advanced Quest Fellows, in partnership with 212 organisations and 258 mentors to reach over 1.3 million people living in marginalised communities.*

We’ve empowered disadvantaged individuals...

- 70% women
- 69% marginalised castes and tribal groups
- 41% below high-school education level
- 11% religious minorities
- 5% illiterate

...to drive sustainable change in over 900 villages and 250 slums

- Improving access to education
- Empowering women
- Ensuring food security
- Generating livelihoods
- Combatting violence against women
- Securing land rights
- Accessing basic amenities
- Addressing health issues

...and expand their reach

- Leading regional and state campaigns
- Building alliances with local NGOs/CBOs
- Connecting with global leaders
- Influencing state policy
- Mentoring the next generation of grassroots leaders

*Our Quest Fellows surveyed up to 500 households and created projects to meet local needs.  
5 We can conservatively estimate that each of them benefited an average of 2,000 people.
What does the fellowship programme look like?

RECRUIT

Working with a range of local partners, we seek out hidden talent and identify emerging leaders with the potential to drive positive change.

Our Quest Fellows’ profile:
- Nearly 3 out of 4 are women
- Nearly 3 out of 4 are from disadvantaged social groups
- More than 1 in 3 are educated below high-school level

TRAIN

We expand self-awareness, confidence and skills by providing intensive training for leaders to explore their purpose and gain relevant expertise.

Training modules cover:
- Understanding self and community
- Communication and research skills
- Citizenship and gender awareness
- Proposal development
- Advocacy and campaigning
- Participatory approaches to local issues

SUPPORT

We establish support systems and peer networks, enabling leaders to collaborate, take risks and meet the challenges of community development.

Support consists of:
- Weekly mentoring
- Project funding
- Monthly stipend
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Access to a network of local and global leaders
- Access to academic expertise and local business support

ACT

Our Quest Fellows devise practical solutions, committing 25 hours per week to improve lives and increase opportunities for the community.

Community impact includes:
- Creating livelihoods and micro-credit schemes
- Increasing educational and employment opportunities
- Ensuring access to water and sanitation
- Improving food security
- Combatting violence against women

MULTIPLY

Our Quest Fellows leverage their leadership by enabling others to work together to drive systemic change.

They empower others by:
- Educating people about their rights and entitlements
- Sharing skills and knowledge
- Influencing local authorities and policy-makers
- Leading collective campaigns on local and state issues
- Connecting networks of fellows, mentors and local organisations

Operational cost per fellow is Rs. 2.2 lakh, which includes a full year of training, mentoring, a living allowance and seed funding for projects and campaigns.
Our impact on Quest Fellows

Our Quest Fellowship Programme transforms the way individuals see themselves – from victims of circumstance to agents of change.

The grassroots leaders we support come from some of the most socially and economically disadvantaged groups in India. The majority are women and nearly three quarters come from minority groups that suffer discrimination. Many have experienced social exclusion and harassment. They often lack the confidence and knowledge to exercise their rights.

Through the programme, these ‘hidden’ leaders have access to the necessary tools and support to enhance their leadership skills, effectively address social issues, and expand their influence in their communities and beyond.

100% of Quest Fellows increase their self-confidence and ability to address issues.

99% increase their understanding of their legal rights and how to claim them.

96% improve their advocacy, communication and conflict resolution skills.

86% continue to support their communities after completing their Quest Fellowship.

Figures taken from 3-year impact assessment in Maharashtra (2012).

“During the fellowship I became more confident about my skills and personality. I learned how to communicate with people, I learned how to network.”

Deepa Pawar, Quest Fellow, Mumbai

“I am now a go-to person in my village for any problems where people need support to stand up for their rights.”

Ashwini Ahiwale, Quest Fellow, Satara District, west Maharashtra
Leela Rojekar: improving waste management and sanitation for 300 households

Quest Fellow Leela raised awareness among 550 locals about the lack of hygiene and cleanliness. She put pressure on the local authorities to unblock drains and dispatch cleaners. As a result, the community is effectively managing waste, and their health has improved. Earlier this year, Leela told us her story:

I was married at 13 and moved to Mumbai with my husband. I used to sort the garbage in the nearby dumping ground. I felt sick very often but I needed to earn money to run my house.

Since we are illiterate people, we did not really understand how to improve sanitation and hygiene. Our community is built close to a stream and water would overflow into our houses. People were falling sick and there were many cases of malaria. This motivated me to work on sanitation.

88% of Quest Fellows apply for a place based on their personal experience of community problems.

During my fellowship, I explained to community members why they should not dump waste outside their houses. I organised a movie screening and street plays on the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. Many people told me that I should organise more awareness programmes.

The gutters in my community were always blocked and dirty water would clog the roads and seep into our houses. When I wrote a complaint letter to the municipal government, cleaning officials started coming regularly.

Through the fellowship, I got the confidence to talk to officials and get problems heard. My biggest achievement was to complete what I had set out to do. Our local sanitation has improved greatly.

86% of Quest Fellows advocate on behalf of community members with local authorities.

People started supporting me because they saw the advantages of cleanliness. Their children were not falling sick as often. Now they are taking ownership of the issue and, even when I’m not there, they ensure that the area is kept clean.

I continue to ensure that my community remains clean and that people do not go back to their old ways. Now I am thinking of other ways to get more people involved in cleanliness and sanitation.

Our impact on public sanitation 2012-13: Rs. 10 million allocated towards 50 women’s toilets by Mumbai Municipal Corporation through the Right to Pee campaign.
In 2013, we surveyed 142 graduate fellows and members of 79 communities to find out what our grassroots leaders have achieved through the programme. They told us how local people have been empowered by:

- Gaining increased awareness about their rights and how to secure them
- Coming together to claim entitlements and appeal to the government
- Fully exercising their role as citizens by participating in local affairs

**Impact of Quest Fellows on communities**

**What the community says:**

“Village meetings have started and people are working on building toilets on a large scale. Community members are raising their voices about their problems.”

Rayata, Wagholi, Pachava Mail tribal areas, Konkan

“People know more about their problems, their need for ration cards and caste certificates, and how to file cases to secure their land.”

Kumbhaitle tribal area, north Maharashtra
Impact of Quest Fellows on communities

By building the capacity of their communities, our Quest Fellows have created positive social impact across 9 key areas:

1. Generating livelihoods
2. Combatting violence against women
3. Ensuring food security
4. Addressing health issues
5. Improving access to education
6. Empowering women
7. Securing land rights
8. Empowering people with disabilities and mental illness
9. Accessing basic amenities

Empowering women

Our Quest Fellows enabled local women to participate more actively in local government and achieve social and economic empowerment.

- 3,000 women regularly participated in self-help groups
- 14,000 people reached by 7 fellows tackling domestic violence
- 446 women regularly participated in local government meetings
- 168 female entrepreneurs set up their own businesses
- 143 women obtained joint ownership of the family home

“The involvement of women has increased in the village council and regarding the rationing issue. Women have started conversations with the government officials themselves.”

Vavanje village, Konkan
Impact of Quest Fellows on communities

Generating livelihoods

Our Quest Fellows worked in rural communities to secure employment for local people, form savings groups to fund small businesses, and improve farming practices.

- Over 1,200 people accessed employment through rural government schemes
- More than 760,000 rupees (£7,500) of bank loans were distributed to community groups to start income-generating activities

What the community says:

“We heard about the employment schemes and 227 people got employed in the village.”
Sonegaon village, Vidarbha

“Local self-help groups were connected to the bank and obtained loans of 10,000 rupees, which were later paid off. Members started saving 20 rupees a day through these groups.”
Parwadi village, Konkan

Improving access to education

By raising awareness about the importance of education, our Quest Fellows helped vulnerable children back into school. They also built the capacity of school management committees to monitor pupil and teacher attendance.

- 103 children enrolled into school for the first time
- 285 dropouts, including girls and tribal children, returned to school
- 194 young people received scholarships

What the community says:

“We have seen an increase in the number of children attending school, and the students’ knowledge has also increased.”
Karegaon village, north Maharashtra

“As a result of meetings with parents, girls started going to school.”
Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, west Maharashtra
Shobha Bolade secured ration cards for 55 poor families and denounced corruption in the government ration system. She worked with local women to form 24 self-help groups to secure bank loans and set up small businesses. She also inspired 200 women to participate in local government. Now a mentor to three Quest Fellows, Shobha works across 24 villages and is actively involved in a food rights campaign led by our fellows.

“At times I just had food for one meal a day. I don’t want a single family to be left out of the food rights campaign. I pledge that each family will have sufficient food for two meals a day.”

Dakoji L. pressured local authorities to ensure that people with disabilities gained access to financial entitlements. With these funds, he obtained medical treatment for 15 people with spinal injuries and five locals affected by mental illness. He also secured free grain for disabled farmers. His impact reached the entire community when he persuaded officials to complete the construction of the main road and monitored children’s nutrition at the local nursery.*

“I have changed a lot through the fellowship programme and realised I have the right to ask. I have learnt to speak effectively with people and the authorities.”

Ashwini Ahiwale empowered women in her community to improve their economic status and working conditions. By forming seven self-help groups, she enabled 70 women to secure bank loans of 25,000 rupees to set up small businesses and improve their farming. Ashwini helped local women obtain job cards so they could apply for rural employment schemes and claim their wages, benefiting 300 households in her village.

“Women are aware of their rights and entitlements and are able to demand to be paid the right wages. I want to keep working for the betterment of my village.”

*Dakoji is a Bridgepoint Fellow who completed his Quest Fellowship in 2012.
Advanced Quest Fellowships: taking leaders’ impact to the next level

Our Advanced Quest Fellowships support exceptional grassroots leaders to catalyse even more profound changes. They provide an opportunity for them to build their leadership capacity further, to deepen their impact, and to increase their sphere of influence at community and policy level across Maharashtra.

We offer a wide range of support designed to enhance the advanced fellows’ impact and influence:

- **Intensive training** on wider development issues, power dynamics, legislative and systemic processes
- **Advanced skill-building sessions** in financial management, legal advocacy, project management and social entrepreneurship
- **Concrete leadership opportunities** through participation in regional and state campaigns and active involvement in developing the capacity of local organisations
- **Specialised and tailored support** including expert mentoring, guidance for proposal development, and issue-focused training
Advanced Quest Fellows

Advanced Quest Fellows are highly promising individuals who have demonstrated strong leadership and significant accomplishments during and beyond their initial fellowship year. Now they are ready to take on more ambitious projects within their issue of focus.

This year, we selected 15 Advanced Quest Fellows who:

- Have an average of 12 years of social sector experience
- Reached around 4,000 people each during their initial fellowships
- Sustained their work after their first Quest Fellowship
- Play leadership roles in community-based organisations

They are tackling challenging social issues in three key areas:

- **Women’s empowerment**: combatting violence and generating livelihoods
- **Socially vulnerable communities**: providing support and education for girls and other disadvantaged children
- **Management of natural resources**: securing land rights for tribal and landless populations and developing sustainable rural livelihoods

What have they done so far?

Since January 2013, our 15 advanced fellows have embarked on the intensive, 2-year advanced programme. They have conducted research, developed projects and established a tight network for collective action. They are also playing a leading role in regional and state campaigns.
Advanced Quest Fellow Sujata is ensuring effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act to guarantee the safety of victims after trial.

During her initial Quest Fellowship in 2008, Sujata supported victims of domestic violence in her Mumbai community by improving their access to legal guidance. She brought 30 cases of domestic violence to court and rulings were passed in favour of the victims.

Despite this successful outcome, Sujata found that the local authorities did not abide by the judicial decisions, leaving victims at high risk of further violence and deprivation. Now an Advanced Quest Fellow, she is gathering evidence on the authorities’ failure to provide adequate support in order to pressure them into taking action. She plans to:

• Examine 50 cases of domestic violence across Mumbai to determine if court orders have been enforced
• Ensure that the police and authorities follow through with court rulings on domestic violence cases so that women are adequately protected and supported

“When you start the Quest Fellowship, you are still learning about yourself and your capabilities. But then the Advanced Quest Fellowship helps you take your work to the next level. It has inspired me to think BIG!”

Sujata will complete her Advanced Quest Fellowship in December 2014.
Advanced Quest Fellow Yogesh is advocating for state policy change to secure vital access to care and support for deaf and mute children.

During his initial fellowship in 2010, Yogesh built the capacity of his organisation to effectively support hearing and speech-impaired children. His organisation currently provides speech therapy for 49 children and specialist guidance for parents.

Now an Advanced Quest Fellow, Yogesh plans to instigate policy change by making hearing tests compulsory for new-borns. Early diagnosis will give deaf children a better chance of accessing the support they need for their development. He also plans to bring three key issues to the attention of policy-makers:

- The lack of customised hearing aids to suit different levels of impairment
- The failure of medical staff to check hearing aids before they are sold
- The absence of government schemes to support deaf and mute children

"Earlier I had never dreamed that I would be trying to bring change at policy level. But the Advanced Quest Fellowship has taught me to dream big and has given me the confidence to work towards it."

Yogesh will complete his Advanced Quest Fellowship in December 2014.
Campaigns for basic rights

Our Quest Fellows and local organisations have teamed up to lead regional campaigns tackling large-scale issues. These grassroots movements are mobilising communities to demand their rights and are influencing government policy from the ground up.

The Right to Pee campaign secured Rs. 10 million in public funding to build free public toilets for women across Mumbai. Women’s safety and sanitation are now integral components of all city planning decisions. As well as making significant contributions to women’s policy at state level, campaigners are harnessing support and securing media coverage to ensure the authorities fulfil their promises.

Food security for low-income families

In Konkan region, a campaign has mobilised over 4,300 people to secure their rights to food entitlements. Quest Fellows are raising support across the region to tackle rampant corruption in the government ration system. More than 400 people from 49 villages now have ration cards. Many rural households have access to subsidised food for the first time, and the campaign has doubled the amount of wheat, rice and kerosene received by some families. Campaigners are now working to provide home delivery of food allowances for remote communities.

State campaign on violence against women

All of our Quest Fellows across the state of Maharashtra are campaigning to combat violence against women. With a network of community organisations, our core and senior fellows are working with the state government to form village committees and provide legal aid and support for local women. After piloting the project in two locations, it will be rolled out in 89 villages across the state. Committee members will receive specialised training and set up counselling centres in each village. The recent tragic case in Delhi has brought this issue to national and global attention.
How to get involved

We would love you to join us in supporting the next generation of grassroots leaders through our Quest Fellowship programme. Some of the ways you can get involved include:

1. Supporting an individual or a number of Quest Fellows
2. Focusing on regions or issues important to you or your organisation
3. Mutual learning, mentoring and leadership development for your team through a flagship CSR programme

To make a donation, please visit:

www.leadersquestfoundation.org/donate
www.coroindia.org

To find out how you can get involved, please contact Sujata Khandekar:

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“When I visited India, I met Anwari, a Quest Fellow. She never had formal education, was married at sixteen and for many years suffered domestic abuse. Today, Anwari heads a network of thousands of women that tackles issues of violence and poverty. We need many more Anwaris…”

Sue Woodford-Hollick, Chair, Leaders’ Quest Foundation
Leaders’ Quest Foundation
2012 accounts (UK and USA)

Income: Rs. 6,09,82,800
Expenditure: Rs. 6,23,53,500

Breakdown of expenditure by area, 2012

- Rs. 4,25,2,000 (7%)
- Rs. 81,33,300 (13%)
- Rs. 4,58,40,700 (73%)

Breakdown of income by source, 2012

- Rs. 2,29,20,800 (38%)
- Rs. 1,24,59,100 (20%)
- Rs. 1,59,80,900 (26%)
- Rs. 96,22,000 (16%)

- Funds in 2013 primarily came from Leaders’ Quest Foundation (UK and USA). As we focus on raising money from sources in India through CORO India, it will be reflected in our income for the coming year.
- Generous individuals, predominantly based in the UK, were our largest source of funding in 2012 (54%).
- More than 40% of our annual income this year came from corporates, trusts and foundations.