Global Challenges Forum Newsletter

Bangalore, India; 17 September 2012

The Global Challenges Forum in seeking to address the complex and multiplying contemporary challenges facing India has recently set up project office in Bangalore, a major metropolitan city in the country. This is GCF’s key initiative in India 2012 attempting to expand the Foundation’s outreach to the country’s subcontinent. This project will attempt to create a national network of partner members from all levels of academia, business, research, government and non-government sectors in a concerted effort to overcome various challenges through its global vision, strategic collaborations, forums, memberships, innovative proposals and policy recommendations.

Bangalore was selected by the GCF due to its critical role and influence within the subcontinent. ‘Bengaluru’, is the capital of Karnataka one of the largest states located in South India. Bangalore is nicknamed ‘garden city' for its numerous gardens, parks and rich diversity of flora and cool subtropical climate. Bangalore is India’s third most populous city and is among the top ten preferred entrepreneurial locations in the world. Bangalore is home to well-recognized international baccalaureate schools, private/government colleges and research institutions. The city has numerous public sector heavy industries, software companies, aerospace, telecommunications, business organizations and defense establishments located within its periphery. Bangalore is widely known as the ‘silicon valley’ of India because of its position as the nation's leading IT exporter and a major hub for India's information technology sector. Bangalore has the largest population of expatriates in India. A demographically diverse city, Bangalore is a major economic and cultural hub and the second fastest growing major metropolis in India.

Dr. Walter Christman’s(USA), Founding Director of the GCF, visit to India in March 2012 paved the way for a strategic partnership with the ACTS group of Institutions, an NGO in Bangalore, managed by its Founder President, Dr. Ken Gnanakan. The ACTS Group of Institutions comprises of primary and secondary schools, colleges and a private university. ACTS has been committed to social welfare and reforms in India for over three decades organizing educational programmes, community welfare projects and facilitating strategic alliances for nation building. The GCF appointed Dr. Moses Satralkar as a Country Coordinator to manage all its major initiatives in India, including organizing international conferences, key projects and forum memberships.

Currently, the mission of the GCF is being announced during local events organized by the GCF Coordinator across India. The first was at the British Council Library (BCL) at Bangalore on the 21st March 2012. A workshop on ‘Integrated Learning’ was organized for ACTS where Dr. Ken Gnanakan was the key resource person. A select group of about 40 educationists attended the event. Dr. Walter Christman, Founding Director, GCF, spoke briefly on the global vision, mission and opportunities envisioned by the GCF. Dr. Christman also announced that one of the GCF forums, the Transformative Education Forum, an international conference, will be convened in September 2012 at Bangalore. This was followed up by a similar workshop on Integrated Learning organized for ACTS at the British Council Library at Pune city, an educational hub in Central India on 26th May 2012. This event was attended by 70 educationists and BCL member’s as well as media personnel. The formal collaboration between GCF and ACTS was announced to the press and this was published. Keen interest was shown by participants and prospective forum members on GCF–ACTS initiatives in India and the TEF 2012 that recently took place in Bangalore.
Dr. Walter Christman - Global Challenges Forum Initiatives and Strategic Networks

Dr. Ken Gnanakan - Integrated Learning and Transformative Education
Major Challenges in India

India being the world’s largest democracy is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It is a militarily strong nation, has major cultural influence and a fast-growing and powerful economy. With its many languages, cultures and religions, India is highly diverse. This is also reflected in its federal political system, whereby power is shared between the central government and 28 states. However, India continues to face overwhelming challenges of poverty, illiteracy, corruption, and inadequate public healthcare. Education is the key to socio-economic reform; particularly in the global context of developing or third world countries. In a global perspective, the developed countries do not have to cope with drastic problems of illiteracy prevalent in other parts of the world. If education practices and policies are not transformative, we cannot free a majority of the world’s population which is still caught up in the trap of illiteracy and poverty. This causes much suffering for generations together. Analyzing the case study of India is a stark picture of reality. Studies on challenges in India were carried out by UNESCO and MHRD. Statistics reveal a grim scenario.

Challenges in India:

- India has the largest population of illiterate people as compared to any other nation in the world.
- Nearly 350 million people are illiterate; this is more than the consolidated population of the United States and Canada.
- India has a population of 1.22 billion people, the world’s second largest population. By 2030 India is estimated to have the largest population in the world exceeding 1.5 billion people, a majority illiterate.
- About 72.2% of the population lives in villages and the rest 27.8% in urban agglomerations. This vast mass of the rural population remains impoverished.
- Uncontrolled population explosion and extreme poverty are direct consequences of illiteracy.
- 500 million people in India live below the poverty line. That is about 50% of the world's hungry people. Their daily earnings are less than $1 and 25 cents a day. These are illiterate daily wage laborers who cannot even afford two square meals a day.
- 32 out of every 1000 children who are born are destined to die before they reach the age of 5 due to malnutrition in families below the poverty line. This works out to 5.6 million child deaths every year.
- 47% of India’s children below the age of 5 are severely malnourished. Malnutrition lowers the human IQ by up to 15 points, and is responsible for learning disabilities, dwarfism, and blindness.
- Two thirds of the total illiterate populations are women.
- Female infanticide in India has reached alarming proportions. According to a UNICEF report 50 million girls and women are missing from India’s population.
- Communal, caste and regional tensions continue to haunt Indian politics and few neighboring countries, sometimes threatening its long-standing democratic, secular ethos and global peace.
- Corruption continues to plague the country especially in the political scenario.

Current Education Scenario:

- Currently, India is the third largest higher education system in the world after China and the United States.
- Put together, India has about 220 million enrolled students, out of which only 14 million or about 6.44% of all students are enrolled for higher education.
The higher education market in India was worth $40 billion in 2008 and has increased to $68 billion in 2012. The Higher education market is now poised to rise by 25% annually to $ 466 billion overtaking real-estate and healthcare by 2020.

According to Mr. Kabil Sibal, Human Resource Development Minister of India, India currently has a total of about 480 universities and about 22,000 colleges in all.

Yet, in comparison the US has about 3,650 universities for its 312 million people while India has only about 480 universities for its 1.22 billion people.

India now needs another 800 Universities and 35,000 Colleges by 2030 to adequately educate its fast growing population.

Challenges in Education:

- Approximately 40% of students, mostly girls, drop out by secondary school. The literacy rate for girls is only 65% and it is estimated that by the year 2020 over 50% of the world’s illiterate population will live in India.
- Salary and compensation for teaching staff particularly in Schools is very poor hence only 4% of graduating students in India take up teaching as a career.
- Infrastructure and facilities particularly in local Schools are limited. Several teachers are not adequately trained or qualified.
- Highly bureaucratized system with multiple controls and regulations exercised by Central and State Governments, statutory bodies/councils. Hence, efficiency of fund utilization is poor.
- Most institutions offer outdated programmes with inflexible structures and educational content.
- Weak research base with a chain of private laboratories outside the university system has resulted in a diversion of human and material resources to the system of laboratories and institutes.
- 25% of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57% of college professors lack either a master's or PhD degree.
- Only 6.44% of Indian students enroll for higher education.
- Growth of higher education needed in India is 37% but current growth of higher education increase per year is only 11%.
- The need for skilled work force and trained graduates is estimated at 750,000 annually. At the current rate India will fall short of real talent totaling appx 5.3 million in the next 10 years.
- Decline in philanthropy, which is much needed for overcoming challenges in the country.

Urgent need for Transformative Reforms

Education is the only way to bring about social welfare and socio-economic reforms. Education in India should be a human right, should provide equal opportunities and should be affordable. However, even today education is a business-oriented sphere where profit is one of the main objectives. Business leaders should reflect on the higher purpose of education. Currently, only privileged ‘clientele’ usually have access to purchase quality education in India. The greatest discrimination so far has been the denial of equal opportunities; this has been responsible for mass alienation, suffering, and armed revolution. Integrated education can bridge all barriers.

In India, we need to ensure that education is holistic and subsidized for the poor; keeping in mind the impact mass illiteracy and poverty could have on a developing world. In an interconnected world, what happens in one part of the world or society has a ripple effect, directly affecting the well-being of other parts of the world. The world faces the threat of alienation and separation. Alienation creates a huge obstacle for people, nations and cultures, inhibiting communication. If communities become isolated due to their specialized knowledge, other parts of their
personalities may be obliterated. As a result, they will not be able to understand each other. Currently, there is a big gap between academic learning and life, its holistic integration and shared knowledge between majority populations of different cultures and communities.

Knowledge is a social process and co-construction of knowledge through partnerships is critical to sustain a global community. A connect and develop approach is a sustainable process, for networking. We need to leverage on the wealth of information available in various forms externally, and building on earlier innovations, internal research or new information published by other educational institutes around the world. This collaborative approach is dynamic and particularly beneficial for developing countries, which require support from developed nations.

On a broader sense, the economic downturn and global recession is also due to irresponsible self-indulgence of ‘highly educated’ individuals occupying decision making positions. They are the products of an educational system that did not equip them with the foundational principles of true leadership. The lack of national and global leadership in public life; insensitivity and corruption are primarily responsible for harrowing social inequity. In fact, in India the strategies to overcome illiteracy have to be deliberated at a much higher level. Reforms in education by introducing holistic and integrated learning models are essential. Transformative socio-political strategies need to be discussed. Keeping this challenging scenario in mind, the Transformative Education Forum has been organized by the Global Challenges Forum and ACTS group of institutions at Bangalore in India.

Transformative Education Forum; TEF 2012, Bangalore

Concept

The Global Challenges Forum (GCF) a consortium of educational bodies, think tanks and international organizations was formally launched in India in Sep 2012. The GCF has organized its 3rd Transformative Educational Forum in Bangalore, India. This is an ongoing initiative of GCF and it was hosted by the ACTS Group of Institutions. During this programme, the GCF has formally announced its international projects, upcoming forums and strategic support for various organizations in India.

Theme

In keeping with the overall thrust of GCF, TEF Bangalore has sought to integrate the overall concern of sustainability through educational initiatives at all levels. The theme was: “Transformative Education for Sustainable Development”.

Program Description

The program featured experts and practitioners from all over the world. The content was covered through brief presentations, case studies, panel interactions, plenary as well as group discussions and personal reflections. Daily summarization of findings has enabled participants to capture the overall concept.

Outcomes

The conference has enabled participants to:

1. Grasp the implications of sustainability for transformational education.

2. Seek to transform their context through appropriate education.
3. Will develop practical guidelines for their own programs.
4. Will foster international partnerships to enhance their educational effectiveness.

**GCF - TEF 2012 Schedule**

**TEF Bangalore Dates:** 12\(^{th}\) Sep – 15\(^{th}\) Sep 2012

**Delegates Expected:** 35 delegates from overseas and 45 from India (apprx 80 people from America, Europe, China, Arabia, Africa and India). Heads of important organizations from India were invited.

**Conference Schedule:** On 12\(^{th}\) Sep - registrations, informal reception, and dinner. Conference schedule 13\(^{th}\) – 15\(^{th}\) Sep from 9:00 am until 5:00 pm; Cultural programme were organized on the last day.

**TEF Conference Venue:** The Alliance Francaise (Auditorium), Bangalore.  
Website: [http://bangalore.afindia.org/](http://bangalore.afindia.org/)

Alliance Francaise is a reputed institution situated in a green retreat in the heart of Bangalore. This is a unique centre for languages, student exchange and artistic creation, hosting conferences, music festivals, art displays and theatre to promote international culture. The spacious Auditorium has a capacity for seating 250 people and is air conditioned, well-equipped with audio-visual equipment, an LCD projector, a big modular stage and lights.

![Auditorium Image](image1.jpg)
![Conference Attendees Image](image2.jpg)

**Hotels and Accommodation:** Two reputed Hotels, close to Alliance Francaise (of about 600 meters, walking distance) located in central Bangalore. These hotels were used as TEF 2012 accommodation.

**Hotel Fortune, JP Cosmos:**

Visit the website: [http://www.fortunehotels.in/hotel/Bengaluru-Fortune_Select_JP_Cosmos.aspx](http://www.fortunehotels.in/hotel/Bengaluru-Fortune_Select_JP_Cosmos.aspx)

Hotel Fortune Select JP Cosmos is a five star hotel in Bangalore. The hotel has all contemporary facilities with a flare of warm and traditional hospitality that makes it popular amongst all its counterparts in the city. The hotel provides all amenities, state of the art facilities, exclusive cuisine
and several complimentary services. The hotel is suited for business and corporate events like conferences and seminars. The hi-tech services of the hotel like internet enabled conference hall and meeting rooms are one of its best and most liked features by the corporate guests. A group discount has been provided for TEF 2012 with revised prices of $ 100 single room and $ 120 double room, irrespective of duration of stay.

Hotel Young Island:

Visit the website:  http://www.travelguru.com/hotels/India/bangalore/hotel-chandra-residency-00003245

Hotel Young Island is a three star hotel, offering a range of facilities for very competitive prices; rooms are spacious, well decorated and provide all amenities (on a par with business class hotels) Good cuisine and complimentary services. Located about 40 minutes from the Bangalore International Airport, the hotel provides easy access to many transports and city's many attractions such as the Vidhan Soudha, parks and gardens and Cubbon Park. The hotel features several room categories depending on any lodging requirements. Rooms are spacious and fitted with standard amenities. There is one Indian restaurant specializing in curries on site. Day trips and excursions around the city and beyond can be tailored to guests' needs, and arranged from the hotel. A special group discount (of almost 50%) has been provided for TEF with revised prices of $ 50 single room and $ 60 double room, irrespective of duration of stay.

Tours and Travels: Billimoria Tours and Travels are organizing a 3 days 2 nights tour (optional post conference tour) for TEF delegates. This is a reputed travel agent in Bangalore which provides affordable cab and tour guide services to Mysore-Ooty (scenic tourist hill-stations in South India) and the Banerghatta National Park/Wildlife Sanctuary. The proprietor has been engaged in this business for over 30 yrs, usually accompanies foreign guests, and is familiar with tourist spots and local hotels/restaurants. A book has been published by a Britisher on his travel experiences and tour with Mr. Rusi Billimoria. Airport pickup and drop for TEF delegates will also be provided by this agency.

http://www.amazon.com/Travels-Rusi-Southern-India-Rogers/dp/1847482937 ;
http://www.amazon.co.uk/product-reviews/1847482937

Media and Publications: Leading Journalists/reporters and publication houses were invited for TEF 2012. The launch of the GCF will be publicized in newspapers and television channels. Local events
creating awareness on the GCF and TEF are being published in leading newspapers in association with ACTS.

TEF 2012 Website: [http://tef.nps.edu/web/guest/tef-2012](http://tef.nps.edu/web/guest/tef-2012)

GCF Website: [http://globalchallengesforum.org/](http://globalchallengesforum.org/)

ANNEX - MEDIA CLIPPINGS

DNA Times, Pune 26 May 2012

‘Student isn’t just a brick-in-the-wall’

Educationist Ken Gnanakan feels that education system needs to be revamped

DNA Correspondent

Noted educationist and environmentalist Ken Gnanakan stressed that the current education system needs to be revamped with a more holistic approach.

Gnanakan, author of ‘Integrated Learning’, was recently in the city to train educators at a workshop organised by the British Council on innovative approaches to education. He said that the education system needs to be transformed in order to allow students’ creativity to flow as well as connect their learning to real life.

“One must ensure that a student isn’t just another brick-in-the-wall. One size fits all formula is no more apt, especially when it comes to educational learning Shakespearean plays and language useful in real life. Moreover, subjects should merge with each other and learning should be fun. How many of us find learning Shakespearean plays and language useful in real life? Moreover, subjects should merge with each other and learning should be fun institutions,” he said.

He said that one needs to think whether the education provided to children would be of any use to them in the future. “How many of us find learning Shakespearean plays and language useful in real life? Moreover, subjects should merge with each other and learning should be fun institutions,” he said.

He added that he does not intend to break the system of education, but merely wants to get into it and make it more creative and holistic.

“The challenge that every teacher and parent faces is to identify the strengths of a student. Intelligence is not just about numerical strengths and literary abilities. If children are good at music and not math, encourage that,” said Gnanakan.

Criticism of the current education system, he said, “When India went under colonial rule, they wanted workers who could talk in English. That’s why the focus of our education system is to develop English language skills even today, but this doesn’t produce thinkers.”

The Hindu, Bangalore 4 Mar 2012
A holistic approach

PEOPLE Ken Granakan, educationist, environmentalist and theologian, makes a powerful case for Integrated Learning

FIRST AMONG EQUALS Granakan believes planning and carpentry should be made as sophisticated as surgery

KRISHNA DATT

ACTS-GCF Event Photographs
Challenges for Education in India

Education plays a key role in transforming society. Education in India should be a human right, should provide equal opportunity, and should be affordable. The Right to Education Act (RTE) could be one of the first steps in this process, despite challenges in its implementation.

India, the world’s largest democracy, is also one of the fastest growing economies in the world. However, our nation continues to face overwhelming challenges of illiteracy, poverty, corruption, and inadequate public healthcare. Education is the key to socioeconomic reform, particularly in the context of developing countries. If our education policies and practices are not transformative, we cannot fix a majority of our population which is still caught in the trap of illiteracy and poverty. This causes suffering for generations together. The educational scenario of India needs to be considered seriously.

Currently, India has a population of 1.2 billion people and has the world's second largest population. It is estimated that by the year 2050 over 50% of the world's population will live in India.

India, the largest population of illiterate people as compared to any other nation in the world. More than 350 million people in India are illiterate, this is more than the combined population of the United States and Canada.

Unrestricted population explosion and extreme poverty are the major consequences of illiteracy.

About 60% of our population lives in villages and the rest in urban agglomerations. This suggests that our rural population remains illiterate and subsequently impoverished, with nearly 50 million people living below the poverty line.

Although, India is the third largest higher education system in the world after China and the United States, with about 220 million enrolled students, only 14% of all students enroll for higher education.

Currently, approximately 60% of students mostly girls, drop out by secondary school.

Salary and compensation for teaching staff, particularly in schools is low, hence, only 4-5% of all graduating students in India take up teaching as a career.

Infrastructure and facilities, particularly in local schools are limited. Many teachers are not adequately trained or qualified.

Many educational reform initiatives have been proposed, but few have been implemented effectively.

Education plays a key role in transforming society. Education in India should be a human right, should provide equal opportunities and should be affordable. The Right to Education Act (RTE) could be one of the first steps in this process, despite challenges in its implementation.

Even today, education is a business oriented sphere where profit is one of the main objectives. Business leaders should reflect on the higher purpose of education. Currently, only privileged children usually have access to quality education in India. Education must have a social objective. The greatest, the most efficient school in the world can fail if it is not able to fulfill its social objectives. This leads to inefficiencies in the educational system.

Business leaders need to be conscious of the need to create a more just and equal society.

Reforms in education are inevitable. Affordable, inclusive, and effective community-based education models are necessary. English and information technology (IT) coupled with domain knowledge, can prove to be beneficial for making out in the different sections of our society.

On a broader sense, the economic downturn is partly due to irresponsible self-indulgence of highly educated individuals occupying decision-making positions. These individuals are the result of a flawed educational system or upbringing that did not equip them with good values or foundational principles of leadership. Lack of good governance in public life, insensitivity and corruption is no longer seen as a surprising social anomaly. In India, strategies to overcome illiteracy and poverty must be deliberated at a much higher level. Transformational strategies need to be discussed and implemented to overcome the challenges of our education system.

Dr. Walter Christman (USA), Founding President of the Global Challenges Forums (GCF) visit to India in May 2012 paid a visit for a strategic partnership with the ACTS group of Institutes, an NGO in Bangalore, managed by its Founder President, Dr. K. K. Ganakrishan. The ACTS Group of Institutes comprises of primary, secondary schools, colleges and a private university. ACTS has been committed to social welfare and reform in India for over three decades organizing educational and community welfare projects and facilitating strategic alliances for nation building. Keeping India's challenges in mind, the Transformative Education Forums Forum was organized by the Global Challenges Forums and is being held by the ACTS group of institutes in Sep 2012, at Bangalore, India.

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