project
DEFY
Design Education For Yourself

Progress Report

2016 - 2020

CONTENTS

Hi, folks!

The third year of a non-profit is when it comes out of its infancy and enters its teenage years. It has the support and freedom to try out new things and slowly progress while staying small. This was never an option for us, because 2020 has been the biggest kick so far. We have strongly disagreed with mainstream schooling With the belief that one day the people may see that exams, schools, and teachers are not the only way to learn.

In the last years, we have come quite some distance, creating 16 self-learning spaces in many different contexts, and countries. This year we created a space that we are most proud of in the village of Gahanga in Rwanda (Africa) - our first Nook hub in the African Continent.The Cisco thingQbator program in 6 universities continued for a second year, enabling more university students to explore new ideas and provide new solutions to heal the planet.

With the nationwide and worldwide Covid-19 lockdowns, we were left thinking again about our role as an organization. So we looked where we have always found inspiration abundantly - the communities we worked with.We saw resilience. We saw the learners from the Nooks getting to work, making masks and shields, and no-touch washbasins. We found out how they responded immediately helping their own communities to survive with dignity. So we followed their lead. Our first role was relief, ensuring families had enough to eat and live so we raised funds through generous contributions from our networks and friends.

In the end, I am grateful to our team, that doubled its efforts in the lockdown, putting in their 200%. It is phenomenal to see how individual missions in life can so perfectly align with the collective mission of the organization. There is much more to do, and the rest will not come easy. But we did not start walking, being intimidated by the distance, but by being enamored by the destination. And we are not stopping.

**Abhijit Sinha
Founder/ CEO**

ABOUT US

Project DEFY enables marginalised communities in Asia and Africa to create their own education through self-designed learning

We create spaces called **Nooks & Nook Hubs** in places like rural villages, urban slums and refugee camps.

OUR VISION

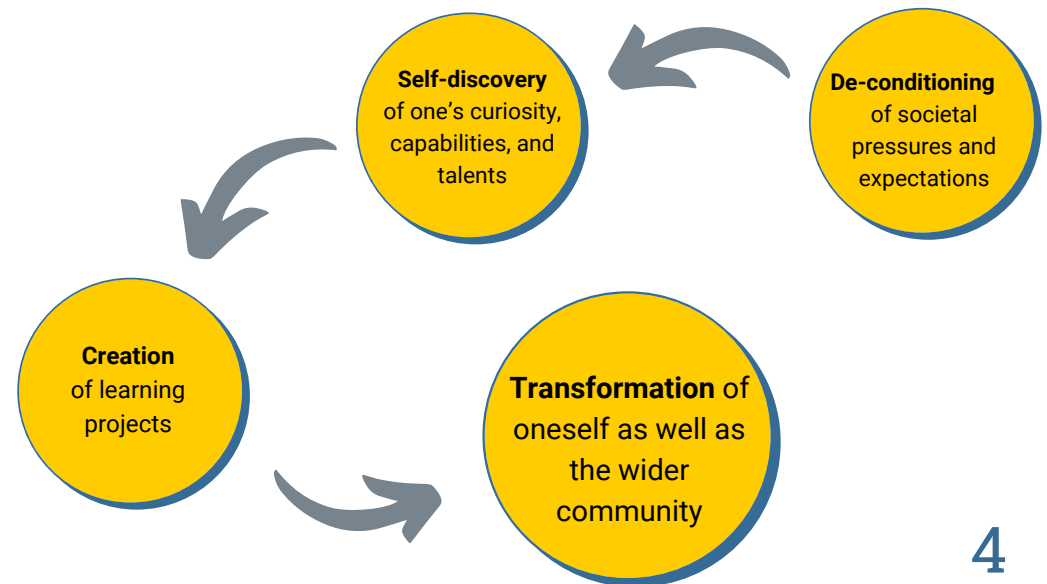We believe that education must be brought back into the hands of the people

Therefore we envision a **self-designed education for all**, which is accessible, equitable and localised.

OUR MISSION

Reclaiming the meaning of education and breaking the existing factory-model of learning, by helping **communities create their own schools without teachers,** called Nooks.

OUR APPROACH

Self-discovery of one's curiosity, capabilities, and talents

De-conditioning of societal pressures and expectations

Creation of learning projects

Transformation of oneself as well as the wider community

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What is a NOOK ?

A Nook is a **self-organized, physical space** created in rural, urban, tribal & refugee communities, where people get together and learn by building projects base on their own interests.

The Nook was **conceptualised in 2014** when the first space was set up in Banjarapalya, rural Bangalore, which later became the first pilot Nook.

experiment • **express** • experience

BRINGING LEARNING BACK INTO THE HANDS OF PEOPLE

Today, **there are eight Nooks spread across India**. We also ran short-term programs in a public library in Shivaji Nagar and an agricultural village in Mangalore.

Uganda, **Africa**

Fort Kochi, **Kerala**

Proto Village, **Andhra Pradesh**

Dilshad Garden, **Delhi**

Whitefield, Kaggalipura, J P Nagar, Shivaji Nagar, Mangalore, **Karnataka**

Khera Jattan, **Punjab**

The NOOK Model

1st Year

A facilitated **phase of skill-building, exploration and self-reflection** which helps new Nook Learners to free themselves from societal pressure and expectations

2nd & 3rd Years

A phase in which **Learners start pursuing their own, advanced learning goals in a systematic manner**. Learners come up with new ideas and innovate to improve and transform community life.

4th & 5th Years

A phase that marks a new beginning for Learners. **They are able to take their skills and learning out of the Nook into the community** to initiate and create independent livelihoods.

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Impact and Learner Projects

The Learner Projects cover a whole range of skills and knowledge fields.

Proof of **L**earning

A proof for the context-based nature of the learning that happens across our self-designed learning spaces is **the sheer variety of projects you can see when stepping into any Nook.**

Deepika, a mother who wants to earn additional income by **making jewellery**

A recent college graduate whose dream it is to build a drone, **acquires basic programming skills** to make his dream reality

Fatima a **65-year old lady who makes an electronic circuit** as part of building a mini-robot together with some school children

A group of young men & women **creating eco-friendly, low-cost sanitary pads** after identifying this as an urgent need in their community

Directly and indirectly impacted Learners across all Nooks
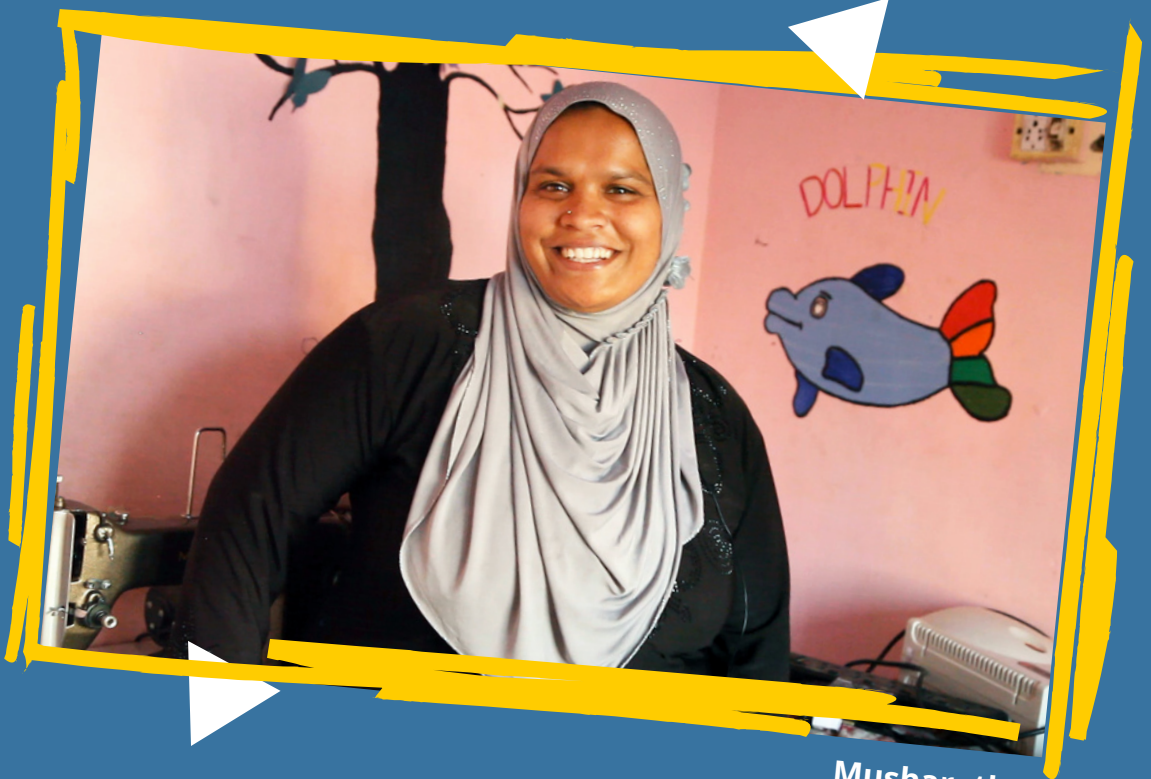
In 2019
7598
Learners

→

In 2020
8754
Learners

LEARNER STORY

I heard from my neighbours that this place is offering free learning opportunities, so I came here to learn tailoring.

I also have a baby son to take care of, and the tailoring skills I acquired at the Nook help me to earn money from home and become more independent. "

**Musharath,
Kaggalipura Nook learner**

Musharath, a 33-year-old mother, lives in Kaggalipura, a small village on the outskirts of Bangalore. Musharath could not complete her schooling and got married early after her beloved father's demise. After coming to the nook, she has learnt tailoring, started her own business and feels more independent now.

LEARNER STORY

> There is no other place which allows me to access laptops and the internet for free.
>
> Here for the first time in my life, I can do anything, and through this, I can acquire new skills according to my interests.

**Muskan,
Kaggalipura Nook**

19-year-old Muskan joined the Kaggalipura Nook in 2018. She comes to the Nook on a regular basis to access computers and the internet and learn new, relevant skills.

Muskan joined the nook after dropping out from school in 11th grade. Currently, she is engaged in making bottle art - reusing empty bottles for creative product design - and tailoring.

Regional Self-Learning Spaces

What is a NOOK HUB ?

A Nook Hub is a combination of a Nook and a growth office. These nodal points enable us

- to create teams in other geographies
- to allow the concept to be locally customised and spread.

The concept of a **Nook Hub came to life in 2019** with our first partner in Rwanda, the Dream Village Organisation.

The IDEA of a NOOK HUB

The idea was to share our philosophy and concept of self-learning with international partners who can grow it locally with our support.

350 Learners have been directly and indirectly **impacted by self-learning** across Nook Hubs in 2019-2020

329 **Projects** have been initiated and carried out by learners

Our **first Nook Hub was created in Rwanda in a village called Gahanga.** We are now looking at creating our second Nook Hub in Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

All international projects are always voluntary with no income to DEFY India as we are pushing to spread knowledge on the Nook concept all over the world.

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LEARNER STORY

> Self-learning means we decide ourselves what we do - it's the greatest freedom there is
>
> ”

Samuel Manishimwe from Gatovu village, Rwanda, has a passion for music and dance. His dream is to become a successful musician and follow in the footsteps of his idols P-Square and Davido, two popular R&B artists from Nigeria.

Coming to the Nook Hub has given him the opportunity to learn more about music and compose his own songs.

**Samuel M,
Rwanda Nook Hub**

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Families Learning Together Program

What is FLITE ?

The FLITE program is a **telephonic initiative that turns homes into learning spaces** for the whole family: **a low-tech solution for life-long learning** among marginalised communities.

Launched during the pandemic, we want to enable the families we work with to **(re-)discover the abundance of skills, knowledge and talents that everyone has** and turn these into concrete learning projects

FLITE Aims

to transform the boring state of **'families stuck together' into a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of 'families learning together'** that can create stronger family and community learning.

IN PILOT PHASE

Our long-term vision is to **create 'Learning Societies' with FLITE** that help reduce the distance among family members and among families, while developing a wonderful co-learning process.

The Design

Phase 1

The initial, exploratory phase of the **12-week telephonic program** will continue for a few weeks

Phase 2

Where families lead conversations and pursue their own, potentially **advanced learning projects** addressing concrete needs, interests, acquiring new skills and knowledge as well as the crucial know-how of **'learning how to learn.'**
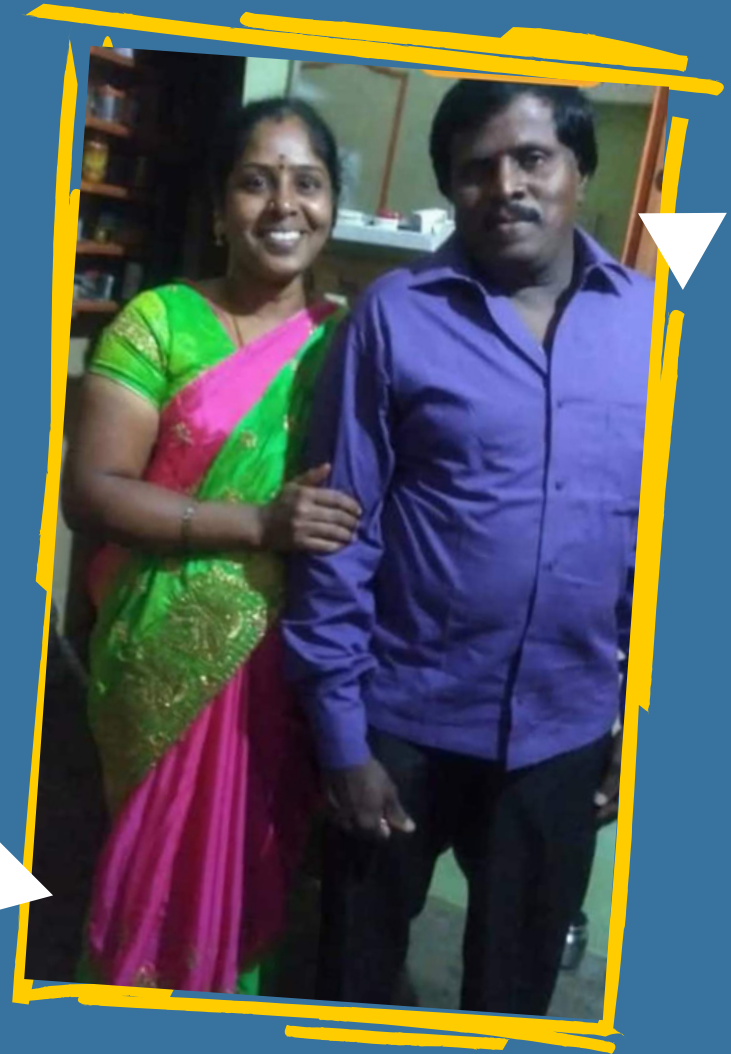
Phase 3

Families eventually take up the role of **facilitating FLITE with other families in their own communities.** Slowly, we want to reach a complete community connection.

LEARNER STORY

> You are giving us an opportunity to learn together. Last week we did something separately and this week we will do something together, so we can learn a lot
> **"**

Balaji's Family

Balaji, a 16-year old boy has been a Nook learner since the past year. Due to the Pandemic lockdown, the family is with no job and school. Now, with the FLITE Team's support, the family memebers are making learning happen in these unprecedented times. Family memebers are interested in learning about typing and basics of computer, photo editing, animations and collectively, cooking and digital rangoli designing.

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CISCO thingQbator: University Makerspaces

What is a thingQbator ?

CISCO thingQbator is a **network of makerspaces in partner Universities** where students can,

- learn about digital technologies in a hands-on environment,
- turn their ideas into working prototypes
- and in the process come up with local solutions to local problems.

Since 2018, we have been working with our partners CISCO, Nasscom, Li2 to create University Makerspaces called CISCO thingQbators

Aim

The aim was **to create makerspaces where IoT enthusiasts could learn more about digital technologies and turn their ideas into working prototypes** and hopefully the next billion-dollar business innovation.
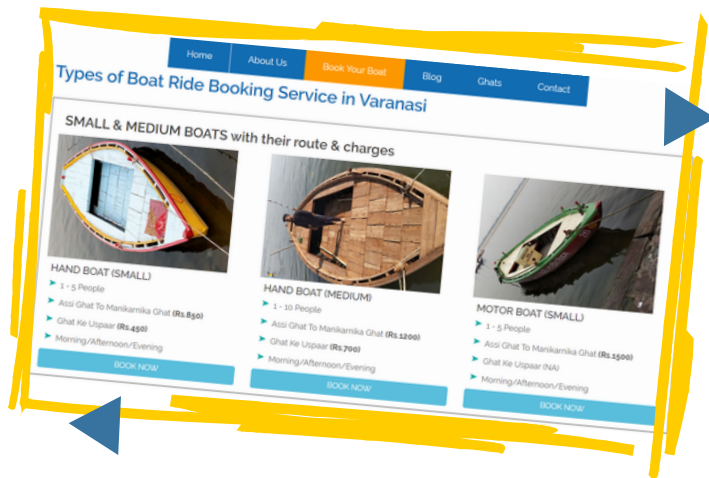
We are now in **six Universities in India**:

- IGDTUW Delhi
- IIT-BHU Varanasi
- Trident Bhubaneshwar
- Amrita University Coimbatore
- IIITMK Trivandrum
- MNNIT-Allahabad Prayagraj

In 2020

There are currently **11 startups** working in different fields and **1600+ learners have benefitted** from the initiative in the two years since its inception.

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CISCO thingQbator Startups

Varanasi Boat Booking

It's a portal to make online bookings of boats in Varanasi for Ganga tour.

Nirol

Khsitij has developed a prototype for measuring the adulteration level in fuel.

Accupace

The team is developing IoT healthcare devices. One such device is Smart Insole that generates and stores electrical energy from your footsteps.

Stodict

Stodict provides early alerts about events or news which has the potential to become breaking news using AI; Empowering journalists to create High quality and engaging content. Team has found customers to pilot their service in newsrooms.

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LEARNER STORY

When I came to the thingQbator, it was just an idea that me and my team had worked on.

Now we have built a prototype for precision farming which we further develop in cooperation with the Government of Kerala's Young Innovators Programme.

"

Hashim Abdulla T, IIITMK Trivandrum

Precision farming refers to everything that makes farming more accurate and controlled. A key component of this approach is the use of information technology.

To Hashim, the thingQbator is a place that offered him the freedom to practice trial and error learning without pressure and fear.

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University Makerspaces Program

The **P**rocess

In the process of **providing education for all** and with **the focus for skilling people to earn their livelihood**

The centralized solutions implemented by the education system in India adopts **methods of delivering education with a one-size-fits all approach** which has been **detrimental** for the quality of higher education.

In the Making

- The team is **researching the various problems in the Indian higher education system**.
- The listed problems will be supported with **real-life stories shared by students and university representatives**
- The next steps to narrow down on our solution will include a **detailed analysis through the design thinking process** and eventually our solution for the university maker's spaces.

Purpose of **E**ducation

Considering that the purpose of education is **to prepare students for the challenges of life and career**, the universities fall short of educating students to think critically and build the necessary skills as per the opportunities in their chosen paths.

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DisPeCS: Disaster Prepared Community Spaces

What is **D**isPeCS ?

It is a **collaboration of people** with various backgrounds and experiences **to create a deployable disaster preparation package** for every community.

The **I**dea behind **D**isPeCS

Local community members always are the first ones to respond to any disaster **without adequate resources and training**

The package will prove to be of immense help for the spaces and various community members existing throughout the world to **efficiently tackle catastrophic emergencies and disasters.**

In the Making

The **P**rogress

- The concept note has already been drafted.
- Team members have done **credible research on various aspects of disaster management**.
- The **designing process** has recently commenced.

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ADDRESSING THE SDGs

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

SDG 4- Quality Education
We ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

SDG 10- Reduced Inequalities
Creating opportunities for people in marginalised communities to learn new skills to help ellievate their financial status

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

SDG 17- partnerships for goals
Partnering with organisations working in marginalised communities in Africa.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

SDG 5- gender equality
On average 50% women participation rate in Nooks

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

80% of trash materials is used to create projects in Nooks and Nook Hubs.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Financial Year	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-19
	Amounts in INR	Amounts in INR	Amounts in INR
Expenditure			
Fort Kochi, Kochi Nook	-	₹63,768	₹329,277
Kaggalipura, Bangalore Rural Nook	₹47,297	₹375,700	₹341,008
Whitefield, Bangalore Nook	-	-	₹588,851
**JP Nagar, Bangalore Nook	-	-	-
*Protovillage Nook, Andhra Pradesh	-	-	-
DEFY Corporate Expenses	₹108,035	₹406,749	₹525,339
*Shivajinagar, Bangalore- Library	-	-	-
*Dilshad Garden, Delhi Nook in School	-	-	-
Cisco-Nasscom ThingQbators (6 University Makerspaces -- Coimbatore, Delhi, Bhubaneshwar, Trivandrum, Prayagraj, Varanasi)	-	-	₹4,184,184
*Kherra Jattan, Punjab	-	-	-
Total of Expenditure- A	₹155,332	₹846,217	₹5,968,659
Receipts/Surplus			
Surplus-Beginning- B	₹0	-₹70,332	₹732,099
Donations & Grants- C	₹85,000	₹1,648,648	₹9,671,198
Surplus-at the year End (B+C-A)	-₹70,332	₹732,099	₹4,434,638

* marked projects have been voluntarily from DEFY without income or expenditure. All international projects are always voluntary with no income to DEFY India.

** marked projects have started in 2019-20.

Note: For many Nooks, the funding partner is able to make expenses directly on ground or via a local partner

International Plans

The Power of Sharing

At DEFY, we strive to share our learnings and philosophy. This has led us to spread our idea and share the Nook self-learning concept globally.

Work in progress

We are excited to be creating new self-designed learning spaces in **Zimbabwe**

In collaboration with two organisations working with local communities **to create more opportunities & build skills for growth & financial independence**.

- A **Nook Hub in Masvingo** with our partners Friends For Matibi
- A **Nook in Bulawayo**, Zimbabwe with our partners SwiZimAid.

FOUNDING TEAM

Abhijit Sinha
Founder /CEO

Megha Bhagat
CGO

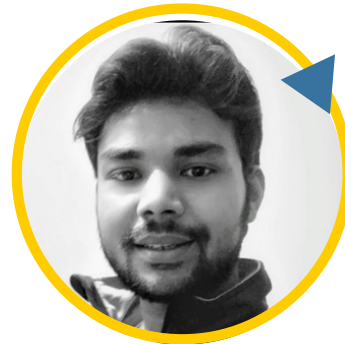**Arvind Badrinayaranan**
Director

> Educational systems are failing our societies, creating individuals unable to think, critique or create for themselves.
>
> Project DEFY is a **call for humanity to collectively create a system of education accessible to all w**hile redefining how to learn and collaborate not just in childhood but throughout our lives.- **Arvind Badrinayaranan**

Team & Volunteers

Our Advisory

Rtd General Pant

Governance and Policies

Sanjay Prasad

Strategy Advisor

Vidya Lakshman

Technology Advisor

Bilal Ghalib

Learning Advisor

"

In the two years that I have advised and mentored Project DEFY I have seen the organization rapidly grow from a **project centric organization to a programme centric organization with a deep emphasis and investments on people and processes**. It has been heartening to see the firm transform rapidly keeping in tune with the times and needs of its core demography as it seeks to truly disrupt the education industry and its mindsets. In the year ahead I would like to see **DEFY emerge as a think tank and a leader in the space of diversified education** with a global foot print guiding others to adopt and spread the need of a new way or learning

- **Sanjay Prasad**

"

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Our Partners

- SINA - Social Innovation Academy
- BitGiving
- Melton Foundation
- CISCO
- NASSCOM Foundation
- Global Humanitarian Lab
- Roundglass
- Dream Village Organisation
- ZimSwiAid

- Headstreams
- Labdoo.org
- International Development Innovation Network
- Protovillage
- TESCO
- Kanthari
- Makeshift
- Friends For Matibi

THANKYOU!

DEFY would not be where we are now without the support and encouragement from our partners from all over the globe.

RECOGNITIONS & AWARDS

RECOGNITIONS & AWARDS

In June 2019 Project DEFY received the **Transcendence Award for their innovative work in education** by the Michigan State University's Global Youth Advancement Summit.

DEFY Won the **100 Top Innovations Prema Gyan Award at Lausanne**, Switzerland at the Good Festival.

Abhijit was selected as a leader to participate and speak at the 48th St. Gallen Symposium held in May 2018 to debate «Beyond the end of work» in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Selected 3 years in a row 2017-2019 for one of the **first 10 of 100 global educational innovations by Finland** based HundrED(.org)

RECOGNITIONS & AWARDS

FELICITATION CEREMONY 2K19

Global Junior Challenge
Projects to share the future

Winner of Global Junior Challenge 2015 held in Rome that rewards the **innovative use of technology for the education** of 21st century and the social inclusion.

FABLEARN

Presented the DEFY model at Stanford University at the FabLearn conference which is now part of the ACM digital Library.

International Visitor Leadership Program
U.S. Department of State

In March 2018, **Megha Bhagat was Recognized as a future leader of change** by the US State Department International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP)

Womennovator
DEFININGSUCCESS

KGS tgs

In 2018, **Megha was selected among 100 "Women of Substance"** by The 'Wommenovator' program.

SUPPORT US!

Due to Covid-19, our communities are struggling to have their basic needs fulfilled. We are working hard to make sure they can get back on their feet and continue to learn together.

Please consider donating to help families in need.

DEFY EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATION
Acc Number –50200023047507
Bank Name – HDFC,
Branch - OLD AIRPORT ROAD
IFSC Code –HDFC0000075

If you want to create or build a Nook contact us: info@projectdefy.org
*Project DEFY is a 80G tax exempt organisation. However, we can only accept donations from Indian nationals at this time.

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CONNECT with US!

Learn more:
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