

September 2026: In FOCUS- CHANGEMAKERS ASHRAM

This edition is exclusively about Changemakers Ashram as we celebrate one year. We capture stories from the Ashram, community connections, alumni initiatives, the cooperative identity, and our vision for the future of Changemakers Ashram.

CELEBRATING 1 YEAR OF CHANGEMAKERS ASHRAM

HIGHLIGHT

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH

COOPERATIVE MODEL FOR CHANGEMAKERS ASHRAM

Our co-founders Ijas and Naji travelled to Hangzhou, China, to attend APCYS 5.0 (Asia Pacific Cooperative Youth Summit), organised by the International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific. They presented an idea for a cooperative model for Kerala's changemakers and were the **only team representing India** at the summit.

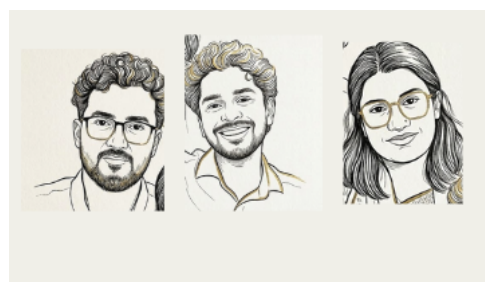
The **Changemakers Ashram** is the first place where we chose to put this model into practice. The idea is to gradually move from an **Ignite-run facility to a member-held institution**. In this model, the Ashram is not simply a space run by Ignite for its community.



CASE STUDY OF ELDERLY GATHERINGS AT CHANGEMAKERS ASHRAM

MODELS @ CHANGEMAKERS ASHRAM

A paper, **Intergenerational Community Spaces and the Social Participation of Older Adults: A Participatory Action Research Study from Kerala**, co-authored by Jaseel C K, Irshad, and Rasha Henna, has been selected for the National Study Conference on Youth Volunteering and Social Work: Building a Sustainable and Shared Future at Madras Christian College, Chennai.



The study builds on **Irshad's Community Action Project after SST 9, Koodanoridam**, which focused on creating community spaces where older adults could come together, connect with one another, and participate meaningfully in community life.

UPDATES FROM CHANGEMAKERS ASHRAM

A round-up of what happened this month and what is coming up at Changemakers Ashram

OPPORTUNITY TO VOLUNTEER AS INTERN

Internship Application is Open

Build the Ashram With Us: Residential Internship Call

The Ignite Foundation is inviting passionate young individuals ready to build with a founder mindset for a six-week residential internship at **Changemakers Ashram**, Chakkittappara, Kozhikode.

- **Duration:** Starting from October 1, flexible start date (6 weeks; extendable based on performance)
- **Location:** Changemakers Ashram, Chakkittappara, Kozhikode
- **Support Provided:** Free accommodation and basic food provided in-kind (Unpaid; no stipend; interns cover travel and personal expenses)

What You'll Do

- Build and shape the Ashram's spaces and operating systems.
- Tend to the plants, garden, and green areas.
- Keep shared spaces clean, organized, and welcoming.
- Spot gaps and take initiative to lead small projects.
- Host visiting changemakers and document the journey.

Who We're Looking For

- Self-driven, resourceful individuals who take ownership of outcomes.
- Comfortable with hands-on, physical work and simple communal living.
- Available on-site for the entire six-week duration.
- Deeply drawn to community work, grassroots living, and social impact.

How to Apply

- **Apply Online:** <https://forms.gle/UbkvQxr3dGM4dSMM6>
- **Or via Email:** Send a short note and your CV to teamigniteindia@gmail.com
- **Application Deadline:** 15 October 2026

SEED BANK

Inviting Seeds to Changemakers Ashram Farm

Help us build the Seed Bank and farm at Changemakers Ashram in Chakkittappara, Calicut! We welcome donations of indigenous seeds, heirloom vegetable varieties, saplings (medicinal, fruit, native trees), and potted plants to enrich our community ecosystem.

- **Drop-off / Post:** Changemakers Ashram, Chakkittappara, Calicut, Kerala, Pin: 673526.
- **Contact:** communication@theigniteindia.com or ijasposedom@gmail.com

READERS
CORNER

1 Year of Library at Changemakers Ashram

The library at Changemakers Ashram celebrates one year this month.

The library was made possible through a statewide book drive, with well-wishers from across Kerala contributing books. Since then, guests and alumni visiting Changemakers Ashram from across India have continued to add to the collection.

We are still accepting books to expand the library. If you would like to contribute books, please reach out to us.

ALUMNI
PROJECTS

SUPPORTED BY SST COMMUNITY ACTION SEED FUND AND
MENTORSHIP

Land Restoration Experiments

Vijitha from SST 8 is leading the Ashram's attempt to put sustainability into practice through **organic farming, land restoration, and beekeeping**. She is developing a farm using organic techniques, planting vegetables, caring for existing fruit plants, and planning for more. She has also taken the lead in setting up beekeeping experiments at the Ashram.

With limited resources, time, and helping hands, the work is growing gradually. Vijitha is also engaging the surrounding community through farming and organic experiments.



The aim is to restore and care for the land, make healthy and nourishing food part of the Ashram, and build a closer connection between people, food, and place.

INSIGHTS

FROM THE TEAM

The Story of Changemakers Ashram: A Home for Grassroots Action

Where do young problem-solvers go when they need the space, mentorship, and runway to build lasting change?

To answer this, The Ignite Foundation began shaping a dedicated home for community leadership. What started as an experiment in a rented Varkala house has grown into a 3-acre ecological hub in Chakkittappara, Calicut—complete with residential spaces, a training hall, and native gardens designed as a living lab for rural resilience.

Today, the Ashram anchors:

- **School for Social Transformation (SST):** Immersive journeys training youth in climate action and community leadership.

- **Hyper-Local Problem Solvers (HLPs):** Supporting rural youth to launch grassroots projects and community enterprises.
- **Climate Circle Residencies:** Monthly gatherings of climate practitioners, farmers, and researchers.
- **Community Co-Labs:** Village-rooted initiatives, children's learning camps, and spaces like the *Dreamers Festival* to envision shared futures.

From watershed restoration to community seed banks, the Ashram stands as a living space where changemakers can truly come home.

Connect with us at communication@theigniteindia.com.

— Naji Mahfood, Co-Founder, The Ignite Foundation

OPINION

GUEST / FOUNDER PERSPECTIVE

Why we need more non-judgemental Spaces for Youth

Young People Need Places, Not Just Programmes

Kerala has no shortage of young people who want to make a difference. They clean up rivers, run libraries, start cooperatives and take on local governance. What they often lack is not motivation or skill, but a place to belong. Most youth programmes end when the training does. Participants go home energised, then find themselves alone with their ideas. Many leave for jobs in cities or abroad, and those who stay often work in isolation. Good projects stall for want of a room, a desk or a colleague nearby.

Across Kerala, public spaces for young people have thinned out. Reading rooms and arts clubs that once shaped generations are fewer and quieter. Cafés and coworking spaces exist, but they are built for commerce, not community. There are very few places where a young person can walk in, meet others working on local problems, stay for a few days, host a meeting or simply find support.

Spaces like the Changemakers Ashram fill this gap. At our Ashram in the Western Ghats of Kozhikode, young people run organic farms and host monthly gatherings for elderly neighbours. These are small things, but they happen because there is a shared home that people return to, look after and run together.

Kerala needs many such spaces: in cities and villages, in the north and the south. Places close to universities and government, where young people can influence policy. Places in rural areas, where they can stay rooted in their communities. Places owned and run by the people who use them, on cooperative values.

Every district could have one, a meeting ground for students, volunteers, social entrepreneurs and elders alike.

Programmes spark change. Spaces sustain it. If we want a generation of hyper-local problem solvers who keep going, we must give them somewhere to return to.

— Ijas Hakkim, Co-Founder, The Ignite Foundation

TESTIMONIALS

Testimonial from Sameer, Intern at Changemakers Ashram

My time at the Changemakers Ashram has been a chance to engage with the place, the people, and the land in a different way. I am still figuring things out and learning every day through the work I do here.

I spend time taking care of plants, watering them, preparing the land, removing weeds, helping with farming, cleaning, and doing other things needed around the Ashram. These may look like small tasks, but doing them regularly has helped me understand the value of care and responsibility.

Working with the land has also helped me feel more connected to the ground beneath me. I am learning by doing, making mistakes, trying again, and slowly understanding how things work.

Living and working with others here has taught me about sharing responsibilities, working together, and being present. I am still learning, but the Ashram is helping me understand myself and my relationship with people, work, and nature a little better.

FUNDRAISER

Help Us Organize Learning Camps for Children in Chakkittappara

As part of our community engagement efforts in Chakkittappara, our interns will be organizing learning camps for children at Changemakers Ashram. The camps will combine fun and learning through nature activities, painting, reading, games, and other creative activities, providing children with an engaging space to learn, explore, and connect.

Each child's participation in the learning camp will cost approximately ₹500. We invite individuals, institutions, and well-wishers to support this initiative and help us make these learning opportunities accessible to more children in the community.

You can send your contributions through GPay/PhonePe to or card at <https://razorpay.me/@theignitefoundation>



SCAN TO GIVE

EVENT SPOTLIGHT



Scan here to register/or click the link

OPEN FORUM: Interested in listening to and taking part in a discussion on The Ignite Foundation's participation in the recently concluded COP17, organised under the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**? Join us for an open forum to hear about our experiences and reflections from COP17. **20 October 5:00-6:00 PM** **Lakeshore Retreats, Thiruvananthapuram** **Hybrid -you can Join online.** If you are interested, please sign up and join the conversation.

To register:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/8AUxxXSeSQOOQiiXS2wrog>

IMPACT STORY

PART OF SST COMMUNITY ACTION SEED FUND AND MENTORSHIP

From a Common Wall to a Shared Space: Restoring a Community Space in Chakkittappara

Changemakers Ashram is situated in Chakkittappara, Kozhikode, where the surrounding community and local public spaces are an important part of the Ashram's engagement with the area.

As part of the 10th batch of the School for Social Transformation (SST), participants took up a wall painting and cleaning activity near the Grama Panchayat Hall. The space included a common wall and plant boxes that required cleaning and maintenance.

The activity involved 24 SST participants, six volunteers, and five facilitators. Before beginning the work, participants consulted the Panchayat President, elected members, local youth, and other community members. Based on these conversations, the participants prepared the initial drawings for the wall.



"I didn't expect this much, and the work turned out really well. Thank you to these young people who came to our Panchayat and contributed their time and effort."

-President of Chakkittappara Grama Panchayat



Mrs Moly Thomas, President of Chakkittappara Grama Panchayat, engaging with volunteers during the activity.

The group then spent an evening painting the wall and cleaning the surrounding area. The plant boxes were also cleaned and arranged as part of the activity.

The process also became a learning experience for the SST participants. They experienced first-hand how community initiatives can be developed through consultation, participation, coordination with local government, and collective action.

Rather than simply creating something *for* the community, they learned what it means to create something *with* the community.

The restored space now stands as a small but visible example of what can happen when young people, local government, volunteers, and community members come together around a shared idea. For the participants, the experience offered a practical lesson in community organising and participatory engagement with local governance. For Chakkittappara, it was an opportunity to bring new energy to a shared public space.

IMPACT

GALLERY



1 YEAR OF CHANGEMAKERS ASHRAM: A view of Changemakers Ashram from the top of the land, with the village on one side and the Ashram nestled amidst nature on the other.



The natural spring is a source of fresh water for the neighbourhood around Changemakers Ashram. The pond at the Ashram has also become part of the session flow, creating an opportunity for experiential learning.



SST alumna Vijitha explaining beekeeping practices to children visiting Changemakers Ashram, helping them understand the role of bees in the natural ecosystem and their importance in maintaining ecological balance.



1 Year of the Library at Changemakers Ashram: Participants using the library space at the Ashram. The books were sourced through crowdsourcing and now contribute to learning and reflection for social change at Changemakers Ashram.



Community at the Forefront: Every program hosted at Changemakers Ashram now includes opportunities to learn from the community, with participants visiting, interacting, and engaging with local residents.



Land Restoration and Farming: Cleaning around arecanut trees and building water-holding bunds to support healthy growth and improve soil and water retention.

THE IGNITE FOUNDATION AT ASIA PACIFIC YOUTH SUMMIT

WRITTEN BY NAJI MAHFOOD, CO-FOUNDER, THE IGNITE FOUNDATION

Presenting our cooperative model for Kerala's changemakers in **Hangzhou, China**, was an experience that made us think more seriously about what the Changemakers Ashram could become.

In September, Ijas and I were finalists in the **Coop Pitch 2026** competition at **APCYS 5.0 (Asia Pacific Cooperative Youth Summit)**, organised by the International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific. We were the only team representing India. We presented an idea for a cooperative model where changemakers could collectively own and shape the spaces they use.

Now, we want to put that idea into practice at the Changemakers Ashram.



The Ashram started as a year-long pilot in Varkala and has now found a home on three acres in Chakkittappara, Kozhikode. More than 1,000 young people have passed through it so far. Today, farming, community action, youth engagement and local gatherings are slowly making it more than an Ignite-run facility.

We want to gradually move towards a **member-held institution**. Alumni and local community members can become members, an elected committee can take responsibility for the day-to-day functioning, while Ignite continues as the apex body supporting standards and continuity.

For us, this is not simply an organisational change. It is an experiment in **shared ownership and responsibility**.

We are also trying to make the Ashram a place where ideas become practice — through land restoration, organic farming, livelihoods, internships and community action.

What we presented as an idea in China now has a place to be tested. **Chakkittappara is where we get to find out whether it can actually work.**

What began as an idea for how changemakers could collectively own and shape their spaces is now finding its first testing ground at the Changemakers Ashram. From presenting the model in Hangzhou to putting it into practice in Chakkittappara, this is a small but important step towards building institutions that are owned, governed and sustained by the communities around them.

ABOUT US

The Ignite Foundation is a non-profit organisation based in Kerala, India, that equips young people to become active citizens and community problem solvers. We work with aspiring social leaders, non-profit founders, and social entrepreneurs in the early stages of their journey, helping them understand local challenges, develop practical solutions, and build initiatives that respond to social and environmental issues.

Our flagship programme, the School for Social Transformation (SST), is a six-month experiential leadership programme that combines online learning, a ten-day residential immersion, mentorship, and changemaker incubation. Participants explore their own values and leadership, engage directly with communities, identify local challenges, and develop initiatives that they can implement with continued guidance and peer support.

Another vertical, the Centre for Youth Impact and Training, focuses on education for social change by promoting active citizenship, social responsibility, and youth participation through workshops and training programmes for schools, colleges, civil society organisations, and institutions.

At the centre of this ecosystem is Changemakers Ashram, located in Kozhikode, Kerala. The Ashram serves as our residential learning and incubation space, where programmes, learning camps, and community collaborations take place. It is envisioned as a space for experimentation in grassroots innovation, enabling young people to work alongside communities, test ideas, and develop responses to local social and environmental challenges.

The Ignite Foundation works with individuals at the beginning of their leadership journey, before they establish organisations or social enterprises. Rather than providing long-term incubation for established ventures, we focus on helping emerging changemakers build the knowledge, confidence, networks, and practical experience needed to take the first steps towards creating lasting change in their communities.

The Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CSIE) is an initiative of The Ignite Foundation focused on strengthening the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. Conceptualised as a Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Accelerator at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in 2024, the Centre is currently in its early stage of development. CSIE brings together aspiring social entrepreneurs, practitioners, educators, researchers, and ecosystem stakeholders through education, research, innovation, and ecosystem development. The Centre currently hosts the Winter School on Social Entrepreneurship, the Design Thinking Fellowship for Social Change, and the Social Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, an online platform that curates learning resources and knowledge on social entrepreneurship. <https://csie.theigniteindia.com>

Get Engaged

Facilitate

Interested in facilitating an upcoming **Social Work Student Camp**?
Contact: Thufail, +919539246962

Donate

Support a scholarship, fellowship, or seed grant for emerging changemakers.
Write to: ijasporedom@gmail.com

Partner

Bring **School for Social Transformation (SST)** or **SSTx** to your campus, institution, or community.
Write to: call2naji@gmail.com

Winter School on Social Entrepreneurship

Interested in collaborate with your campus, institution, or community.
Write to: jaseelck@theigniteindia.com