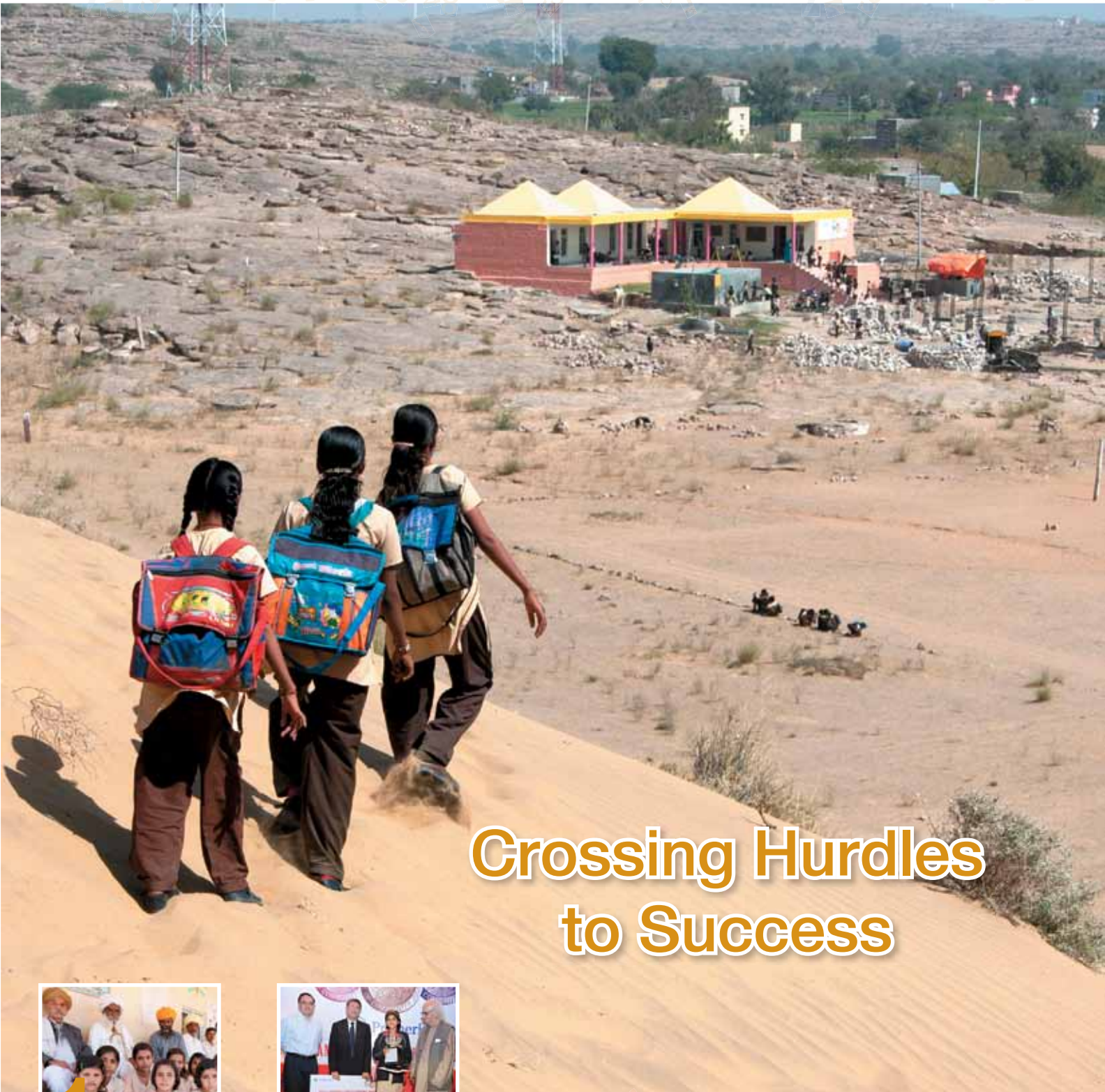


voice of change

ISSUE 5, MARCH 2012



Crossing Hurdles to Success



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Realizing the Big Dream – Together



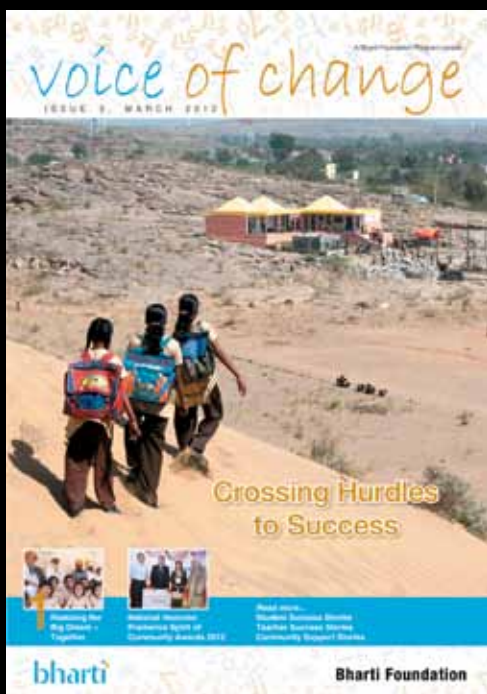
National Honoree: Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards 2012

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Student Success Stories

Teacher Success Stories

Community Support Stories



From the CEO's Desk

Dear Friends,

The emergence of the Satya Bharti Schools as “temples of learning” is indeed a cause for celebration. In the last issue of the ‘Voice of Change’ we shared with you the award winning campaigns undertaken by our children to bring about social transformation in their communities. In this issue we are highlighting stories of all those people – students, teachers and communities – who have used the power of education to make a difference in their own lives as well as of those around them.



Each incident in this issue of the newsletter spells a story of courage, perseverance and determination. It is about people who have challenged their own boundaries and emerged winners. These inspirational stories of fortitude and success reaffirm my belief of being on the right path to develop children who will be the true flag bearers of a brighter tomorrow – educated, responsible and with a sense of commitment to their own societies.

Please join me in saluting these changemakers.

Warm Regards

Vijay Chadda
Chief Executive Officer
Bharti Foundation

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Realizing the Big Dream – Together

Working across remote villages, the Satya Bharti School Program continues to overcome challenges, strongly supported by the stakeholders at the grassroots level.

The Satya Bharti School Program set out on its journey, six years ago to ensure access to quality education for underprivileged children in the rural pockets of the country. Focussing on the girl child and children from the poorest and marginalized sections of society, today 253 Satya Bharti Schools deliver quality education, free of cost, to over 33,000 children across six states. Gaining visibility as one of the largest end-to-end education initiatives by a corporate in India today, the program has been a positive influence on the lives of its students, teachers, parents and communities at large. However, what has been even more heartening is the way people have been motivated by our schools and have undertaken initiatives in their own unique way to ensure its success. Thus, today while the impact in terms of numbers, learning level parameters, achievements etc. is a measure of its quantitative success, it is really the stories of change that have defined the mission of the program and been the stimuli for further progress.

Leading this journey from the front have been our teachers who are the pillars of our program and the conduits of quality education in our schools. While their own passion and commitment drives them to go about their daily roles with utmost enthusiasm, the organization has also put in place several awards and recognitions to identify and honour them for all the innovative practices they develop on a day-to-day basis to make learning an interesting and interactive experience for children. Both the Best Practices Awards and Innovation Awards, for teachers and school support teams, ensure that their efforts are recognized and disseminated to other teachers. This not only acts as a boost to their morale but also enhances their levels of motivation, egging them on to continue to perform to the best of their ability, despite their own struggles and hardships.

Program Statistics: February 29, 2012

- Number of Schools Operational : 253
 - Primary Schools : 236
 - Elementary Schools : 12
 - Sr. Secondary Schools : 5
- Number of Students Enrolled : 33530
- % of Girl Students : 48%
- % of Students from SC/ST/OBC Categories : 76%
- Number of Teachers : 1347



At a programmatic level, the focus on the child has always been of prime importance in our program. Thus now with Bharti Foundation ready to start operations in 48 of its 50 elementary schools, an Adolescent Education Program is being put in place to help children upto 14 years of age prepare to face the physical, emotional and social issues associated with that age group. The curricular interventions continue to focus on the holistic development of children ensuring that they emerge as change agents in their own capacity. This, in turn, acts as a trigger for community members to proactively engage with the schools and provide support through their time, knowledge, skills and other contributions.

We are also humbled that our efforts for social development have been recognized at national and international platforms in the last few months. Bharti Foundation has recently received the award for the 'Best NGO for Excellence in Education' at Concern 2012, organized by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India and Bal Bharti Academy and the Global CSR Award in the category of Education at the World CSR Day. Awards such as these only reinstate our belief that we are on the right path towards making a difference and a positive impact in the lives of those who are in some way associated with the Satya Bharti School Program.

Mamta Saikia
Head – Development & Alliances
mamta.saikia@bhartifoundation.org

Setting a Paradigm

Name of Student: Tulsi
Class: IV
School: Satya Bharti School, Judia
Jodhpur (District), Rajasthan

Tulsi travels 10-12 days every month from Shekhara, a village situated 35 kilometres away, to the village of Judia to study at the Satya Bharti School there. The rest of the month, she manages the household, fulfilling her duties towards her husband and in-laws.



Tulsi has challenged mindsets against the education of girls

According to a prevalent custom in Judia village, all the unmarried girls in the household are married off by the family, irrespective of their age, to counter the gloom post the death of the senior most male member of the family.

of till now. She tried hard to convince her in-laws to let her stay in Judia and complete her education, but to no avail. Thus while Tulsi had to leave her parental house, she had also decided that she would not let this thwart her desire to learn and would find a way to persuade her in-laws to send her back to school.

Tulsi joined the Satya Bharti School in the Judia village of Rajasthan as a student of Class II. Previously studying in the government school in the village, she often faced discrimination and harsh punishments by her teachers. Humiliated and angry, Tulsi soon dropped out of school. Sitting at home, she would have completely lost her interest in studies if it was not for her father who enrolled Tulsi in the Satya Bharti School in the village. Given an equal opportunity to perform and appreciated for every effort that she made, attending the school reignited Tulsi's love for learning and she soon proved to be an exemplary student. Additionally, taking part in all sports, Tulsi became the captain of the school's *kho-kho* team and won the runners-up position at the Satya Bharti School District Sports Meet in 2010.

Settling down in Shekhara, Tulsi instantly took up all responsibilities of the house, never giving her in-laws an opportunity to complain. She also ensured that at every opportunity she persuaded her in-laws to send her back to the Satya Bharti School in Judia, a place that had reignited her love for learning and which she now missed dearly. It was only after months of facing opposition, rebuke and disagreements and of relentless urging that Tulsi's husband and his family caved in to her requests, allowing her to return to school for a few days each month. Today, though Tulsi attends school for only 12 days in a month, the support of her teachers ensures that she is able to complete her lessons and be at par with the rest of the class.

While her growing interest in studies expanded Tulsi's dreams of a bright future, she was completely unaware that she had a husband, 35 km away, in Shekhara village. Her in-laws had now also started forcing her parents to send Tulsi there. Tulsi had been married at the age of three, an incident she was completely unaware

However, every time that Tulsi returns to Shekhara, she is apprehensive of her in-laws' permission to let her go back to school the next time. Unwilling to let go of her aspirations, Tulsi has continued to hold on to her dreams, challenging mindsets and setting a precedence for other girls like her in the rural pockets of Rajasthan.

“The courage and determination of Tulsi baffles us. Though we are constantly concerned about her, we are immensely proud of her.”

– Mr. Narayan Ram, Father of Tulsi

Overpowering Disabilities

Name of Student: Parveen
Class: IV
School: Satya Bharti School, Kohrar
Rewari (District), Haryana

Parveen has to undergo a lot of physical discomfort as he attends school everyday. Being unable to use both his arms, he uses his legs to write, which often ache trying to jot down what is being taught in class. Parveen could have resigned to his fate long back. Instead, he chose to not stay at home but educate himself for a better future.

Parveen was born with a physical disability that made both his arms unusable. With visits to doctors in the vicinity and as far as Udaipur in Rajasthan proving futile, Parveen knew he would

have to live with this for life. Also, losing his father at a very young age, Parveen saw his mother struggle alone to fend for her four children and herself and realized quite early in life that he would have to fight against his personal disability to be self reliant and able to support his family. Enrolled at the Satya Bharti School in Kohrar, Haryana, Parveen thus saw his education as a tool that would enable him to achieve this intent and turn his life around.

Wanting to be at par with other children and not be left out because of his disability, Parveen decided to use his feet as effectively as others used their arms. Faltering and failing at first, he continued to struggle, bettering the speed and efficiency with which he could complete his work everyday. Overtime, Parveen has learnt to use his feet to write and complete other class activities. He has also found a way to manoeuvre his movements, thus ensuring that his sitting postures in class are not a constraint anymore to his participation or performance. Going a step further, he has never allowed his physical disability to overshadow his love for sports, always being the first to take off in a race against his classmates. Keenly participating in other co-curricular activities and school events, Parveen outdoes everyone with his sheer enthusiasm and grit to perform.

Today, there is hardly anything that Parveen cannot do, either in school or at home. From helping his mother at home to being a 'star' student at school, Parveen has overpowered what could have been the biggest bane of his life.



Parveen has overcome physical disabilities to outperform the rest

“Parveen has made me hopeful for a better tomorrow. I want him to be highly educated and he will prove himself worthy of everything that other normal children are”

– Ms. Rajesh Devi, Mother of Parveen

A Will that Compelled

Name of Student: Veerpal Kaur
Class: IV
School: Satya Bharti School, Akoi Sahib
Sangrur (District), Punjab

Veerpal Kaur loves to go to school and was enrolled in the Satya Bharti School in Akoi Sahib, Punjab. However, her father was unable to meet her daily transportation costs and soon pulled her out of school. Veerpal did the next best thing - she started paying for the transportation herself!

Each day Veerpal travels six kilometres from her home in Katarpura village, to attend the Satya Bharti School in the village of Akoi Sahib, Punjab. For her going to school means interacting with fellow students and teachers and engaging in various activities, in class and outside - things that she most enjoys. But for Veerpal, going to school has also been a struggle. Within a few months of joining school, her father, a labourer with limited means, realized that spending 200 rupees every month on Veerpal's conveyance was much more than what he could afford. Therefore, though unwilling, he had to withdraw her from school.

Veerpal, distraught at her father's decision, initially thought she could convince him to send her back to school. Pleading with him when requesting didn't work, she was desperate to find a way to change his mind. With every demand of going to school, Veerpal's father only became more adamant. There was also a sense of helplessness as there was nothing he could do to solve

the situation. But Veerpal persisted and for days on end she would avoid conversation with family members believing that this would compel her father to change his mind.

While Veerpal would not give up on her desire to attend school, nothing seemed to convince her father. Forced to be absent from school, she grew worried about losing out on her lessons and made up her mind to take matters in her own hands. She decided to use the money that she had received as gifts from relatives to travel to school, without burdening her father any longer. Soon paying for her commuting costs herself, Veerpal started attending school once again.

Veerpal's undeterred fortitude and clever solution to the problem convinced her father of her urge to study. Inspired by his daughter, he now works overtime to be able to afford to send Veerpal to school so that she can pursue her dreams.

"I had lost the hope that I can send Veerpal to school, but her determination drove me to change my mind"

- Mr. Darshan Singh, Father of Veerpal Kaur

Veerpal's undying urge to attend school is an inspiration for her father

Taking Learning Forward

Name of Student: Santoshi
Class: V
School: Satya Bharti School, Bamanua
Shahjahanpur (District), Uttar Pradesh

Santoshi belongs to an extremely weak economic stratum of society, where it is a daily tussle to make ends meet. Her father, a “tonga” driver, can barely provide for his family of six. It was this appalling financial condition that made Santoshi utilise the lessons taught in school to sustain her family.



Santoshi is an exemplary student and an equally efficient teacher supporting her family

As a young girl in a remote village of Uttar Pradesh, Santoshi, a student of the Satya Bharti School in Bamanua, knew that life would always be a struggle – a struggle to support her family and help make ends meet and a struggle to study and fulfil her aspirations. Keen to go to school, her first blow came when she had to drop out of a neighbourhood school because of the absence of teachers and irregular classes. However, eager to continue her pursuit of studying and using education as the key to a brighter future, Santoshi set about finding an alternative solution to the problem.

It was with this vision in mind that Santoshi joined the Satya Bharti School in Bamanua, Uttar Pradesh as a student of Class III. Once in school, the achievements

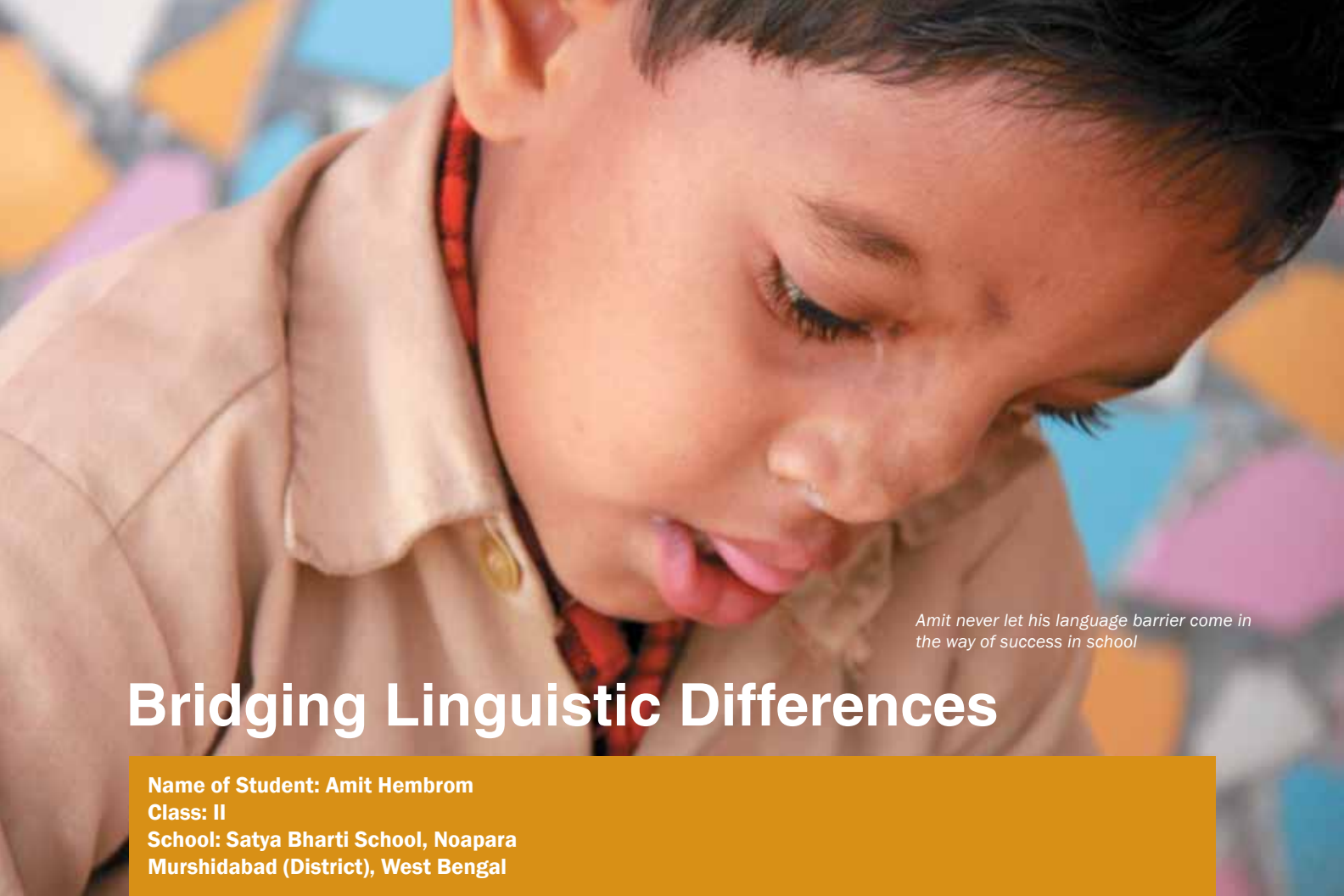
of her sister, a student of the school since pre primary, the teachers’ constant encouragement and the interactive lessons instilled in her the desire to study hard and stand out amongst all the other students in her class. The grim economic condition of her family also made Santoshi toil harder in school wanting to grasp every small thing that she could learn and aware that it could prove vital in the future. It is this dedication that soon earned Santoshi an ‘A Grade’ in academics and extra curricular activities. The school also gave her an opportunity to hone her skills in sports, helping her win medals at the Satya Bharti District Level Sports Meet and leading the school’s *kho-kho* team.

While at school, the teachers fascinated Santoshi. Coming back home each day, Santoshi started conducting classes for children studying in the neighbouring schools, helping them with their lessons. Not only did this help augment the family income but it also made a positive impact on the children she taught in the village.

Santoshi’s story is one of self belief and effort. As for her, she believes that the task she has taken up will only make her more confident and provide her the unique experience of being a ‘student teacher’ which will help her achieve much bigger goals in future.

“It was quite unexpected when Santoshi told us that she wanted to teach children. At such a young age she is helping share my burdens. I am very proud of my daughter and have big dreams for her.”

– Mr. Munna Lal, Father of Santoshi



Amit never let his language barrier come in the way of success in school

Bridging Linguistic Differences

Name of Student: Amit Hembrom
Class: II
School: Satya Bharti School, Noapara
Murshidabad (District), West Bengal

For months after joining school, Amit Hembrom could grasp little of what was being taught in school, never raised his hand to answer in class and had no friends. Everyone thought he would drop out; Amit couldn't have proved them more wrong.

Amit joined the Satya Bharti School in Noapara, West Bengal as a student of Class I. Belonging to a minority tribal community and being a first generation learner, the experience of a school was very new for him. Additionally, Amit neither understood nor spoke Bengali, the predominant language in the state, nor English, which was being taught in school, making the lessons even more difficult for him. He also felt neglected, being kept out of conversations by his classmates as they could not understand the tribal language he spoke.

Amit remained a silent spectator in class for a long time, able to comprehend only a miniscule amount of what was being taught. But the joyful activities in school and his desire to learn saw him going to school every day. Sitting at the back of the class on most days, his attention never faltered in the urge to grasp the lessons to the best of his capability. Over a period of time, he worked hard at listening attentively to his teachers and slowly started involving himself in classroom discussions and conversations to learn and be included. Amidst his half spoken sentences and considerable stammering, his efforts applauded by the rest of the class, his love for school only increased.

“From the very beginning Amit was enthusiastic about attending school but we could not help him much as language is a big barrier for us. But now we are very happy at his success in school!”

– Ms. Radhon Hembrom, Mother of Amit

Amit's spirited fight against his natural circumstances and restrictions were soon able to draw the attention of his teachers. Supporting him in his unflinching enthusiasm to learn, they gave him ample opportunities to participate in class and Amit never missed any of them. His growing understanding of the language and lessons, with time, also gave him the confidence to participate in all group activities both in class as well as outside, earning him friends in the process. Once 'silent' in class, today Amit is one of the most active participants of classroom sessions and outdoor activities, proving without a doubt that the desire to learn and excel can overcome even the biggest challenges in life.

Breaking Barriers

Name of Student: Simarjit Kaur

Class: II

School: Government Satya Bharti Adarsh Senior Secondary School, Fattubhila
Amritsar (District), Punjab

Simarjit aspires of becoming a teacher or a nurse when she grows up. She believes that she will achieve her dream one day, coping with every challenge that will come her way.



Simarjit did not let emotional turmoil and household responsibilities dampen her dream to study

leaving Simarjit to look after her family. Heartbroken, but undeterred, Simarjit immediately understood the responsibilities of the household. She had to look after her younger siblings and her father who was a daily wage earner and worked long hours each day, coming home only late at night.

Simarjit, the eldest child in the family, instantly made up her mind that while she would manage the household and take care of her siblings, she would adopt a new routine so that her education was not compromised with. The sense of passion that Simarjit had developed as a young girl and the desire to “give her best” towards everything that she undertook, now gave her the strength to take up the mantle of both worlds – her school and home. She would wake up very early in the morning to help her aunt with household chores before reaching school on time. On returning every afternoon, she would finish the remaining work in time to sit down with her books and go through the lessons of the day.

But once in school, Simarjit would leave the other world behind and immerse herself in her studies and other school activities. Simarjit also ensured that she did not get any special treatment at school because of the conditions at home. Amazed by her ability to juggle both the worlds with ease, Simarjit’s teachers and friends helped her during this crucial period and provided her support that she needed at this stage. Today, along with Simarjit, her teachers are also convinced that Simarjit’s courage will enable her to face all adversities in life and emerge a much stronger and confident individual in future.

Simarjit was enrolled at the Government Satya Bharti Adarsh Senior Secondary School in Fattubhila, Punjab as a student of Class II in September 2011. From the very first day, Simarjit’s keenness to learn was evident and her teachers enjoyed interacting with her, egging her on in her studies. Little did they expect that just when Simarjit had settled into school, her mother would pass away,

“After my mother’s death, I knew I had to work harder now so that I would not have to give up my dream.”

– Simarjit, Student, Government Satya Bharti Adarsh Senior Secondary School, Fattubhila

Passion for Social Good

Name of Teacher: Ms. Ananthavalli - Head Teacher
School: Satya Bharti School, Petachikudiruppu
Sivaganga (District), Tamil Nadu



Having left her private job in town, Ananthavalli teaches rural underprivileged children today

Ananthavalli could have continued being a teacher in a private school near her home in Karaikudi town but her commitment towards social welfare saw her teaching underprivileged children in a small village 24 km away.

For ten years Ananthavalli taught science in private schools in the Karaikudi town of Tamil Nadu. Though content with doing a job she loved, Ananthavalli always urged to “make a difference,” utilizing her knowledge to light up the lives of those who had no access to education. Thus for her, being the Head Teacher of the newly opened Satya Bharti School in Petachikudiruppu was the much awaited opportunity and gave her the chance to teach underprivileged children and help them realize their true potential.

Ananthavalli knew that being a teacher at the Satya Bharti School meant teaching children of the primary section, most of whom are first generation learners, a challenge far greater than what she faced as a senior secondary school teacher. This, combined with the fact that she would have to travel 50 kilometres each day to reach the school in Petachikudiruppu, a small village in Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu, made the task appear even more daunting. While this could have demotivated her to return to the schools in town, she took up the responsibilities as a challenge, determined to make the school the best in the neighbourhood.

When she joined, the school was still under construction with no toilets or drinking water. Ananthavalli taught students in the open, eager to make a start. With only 88 students and two other teachers, Ananthavalli realized that it was her responsibility to establish the program’s intent in the community and get their support. So each day after school, she would visit the homes of community members, counselling them on the benefits of education, especially for girls and urging them to send their children to school. Breaking through apprehensions of a new school in the village, Ananthavalli continued her visits till she had ensured the trust of the community in the program.

“Ananthavalli is one of the most inspired and inspirational teachers that we have in the program today.”

**– Mr. S. Suresh, District Coordinator,
Sivaganga, Tamil Nadu**

It was this dedication and continued commitment that soon earned the Satya Bharti School an “A” grade in performance and the unwavering support of the community. It is Ananthavalli’s efforts that have proved that passion and hard work eventually yields success.

Rebuilding Hopes

**The Teachers of Satya Bharti School, Kurria Kalan
Shahjahanpur (District), Uttar Pradesh**

The Satya Bharti School teachers transform lives; not only by imparting quality education but also defeating circumstances that stifle the growth and development of students. For Neelam, it was the fight against her early marriage.

Neelam, an 11 year old student of the Satya Bharti School in Kurria Kalan, Uttar Pradesh was busy training for the Satya Bharti School District Level Sports Day. Her teachers, confident of the excellent sportsperson that she is, were sure that she would win a few medals. But all of a sudden Neelam stopped coming to school. Initially overlooking it as a medical leave, her teachers grew worried when several days passed without any news on her absence. Visiting her home to enquire about her absence, they were taken aback when they heard that Neelam’s mother had arranged her wedding to ease the financial burden of the family.

Strongly objecting to their student being married off at the age of 11 years, the teachers visited Neelam’s house regularly over the next few days, trying to dissuade her mother. But Neelam’s mother was adamant and stuck to her decision, citing poverty and widowhood as the reasons behind the wedding. The teachers also realized that the majority of villagers were in favour of the marriage and the village Panchayat could therefore do little in this case.

Dwarfing Disabilities

Name of Teacher: Ms. Amandeep Kaur
School: Satya Bharti School, Khanpur
Ludhiana (District), Punjab

Amandeep Kaur's journey has never been easy. Leading a life fraught with challenges at every step, Amandeep has emerged a victor, defeating every adversity that tried to stall her success.

Amandeep was born a physically disabled child. Unable to use her limbs, she had to depend on others to go about her daily work. Also, belonging to an economically weak family, she was expected to stay at home and not aspire of a life that others could dream of. From a very young age, Amandeep questioned the realities that surrounded her and made up her mind to not let her disability hold her down. It was with this

“Amandeep has never been defeated by obstacles. When she joined school, she was determined to be like other teachers. After the accident, we thought she will never ride to school again, but she has again surprised us all”

**- Mr. Gurpreet Singh, Head Teacher,
Satya Bharti School, Khanpur**

The teachers, however, determined to save Neelam's future, sought the help of the local media and NGOs to highlight the issue and exert pressure on the local administration and on Neelam's mother. They asked for the story to be published in the local newspapers to warn Neelam's family against their decisions. The continued fight for Neelam's rights by the school staff eventually paid off and her mother was forced to call off the wedding. In addition, the teachers also arranged for a local NGO to provide financial support to the family and also helped form a village committee to monitor Neelam's case and prevent further child marriages in the village.



Teachers in Kurria Kalan left no stone unturned in their fight against Neelam's untimely marriage

Freed of the burden of marriage, Neelam, proudly received the silver medal at the District Level Sports Day, a picture of hope and happiness; that which her teachers strived hard to return to her.

“When my mother fixed my wedding, I thought I would never be able to fulfil my dreams. It is only because of my teachers that I am in school again”

- Neelam, Student, Satya Bharti School, Kurria Kalan

aim in mind that she travelled long distances to attend school and today holds a B. Ed and a Master's degree in Hindi.

In 2008, when the Satya Bharti School in Satiana, Punjab announced a vacancy, Amandeep saw in it a chance to gain foothold in the professional world and prove herself. Taking up the role of a teacher, Amandeep



Amandeep's physical disability egged her on to prove herself

utilized her skills to the fullest, grasping every small thing she could learn and implement in class to make lessons joyful for children and also to maximize their learning. It was her spiritedness that soon made her popular among the children and forged a close bond with them.

After brief stints at the Satya Bharti Schools in Satiana and Lakhawal, Amandeep was transferred to the Satya Bharti School in Khanpur, closer to her resident village and easing her travel time considerably. Initially having her father accompany her to school everyday, she wanted to be independent like the others and soon, to her parents' surprise, purchased a two-wheeler.

Having practiced religiously till she mastered riding it, Amandeep started riding her 'scooty' to school, all by herself.

Confident that she had won life's major challenge, Amandeep was happy fending for herself and her family. But fate struck a blow and she met with a severe road accident, leaving her with a badly fractured thigh bone and six months of complete bed rest. Determined not to give up, she fought against her own body and was soon back on her feet, returning to school to teach. Amandeep's courage and the 'never give up' attitude has made her a role model for both her fellow teachers and the students at the Satya Bharti School.

Victory through Unfortunate Circumstances

Name of Teacher: Mr. Maliram Bunkar

**School: Satya Bharti Government Primary School, Bodiya Ki Dhani
Jaipur (District), Rajasthan**

It would have been very easy for Maliram Bunkar, hailing from a small village in Rajasthan, to lose all hope. In spite of being educated he could not find himself a job matching his qualifications. But he kept his dream alive of being a teacher one day.

Maliram Bunkar, a graduate from the University of Rajasthan, belongs to a financially backward family and had to work hard to complete his education. While still an undergraduate student, he lost his father and had to take on the mantle of being the family's sole sustainer. While he was sure that once out of college, he would find a suitable job that would help him support his family, months passed and Bunkar could not find a job that matched his qualifications. However, aware of his familial responsibilities made Maliram take up the role of the School Guardian at the Satya Bharti Government Primary School in Dhani Maliyan, Rajasthan. Though this was far below his skills and aptitude, Bunkar saw in it an opportunity to be a part of the schooling system where he would prove his mettle one day.

"I had to face bad times but was confident I could be a teacher. Today, I have also managed to get my sisters married and enrol my children in school."

**- Mr. Maliram Bunkar, Teacher,
Satya Bharti Government Primary School,
Bodiya Ki Dhani**

Maliram worked hard at his job, helping teachers in their day-to-day work and spending as much time as he could trying to learn effective ways of teaching. Responsible for managing the training resources for the school, he would often be a 'silent' participant of the training sessions held for the teachers of the school, paying attention to enhance his knowledge. After months of working as the School Guardian, he heard about a teacher vacancy at the Satya Bharti Government Primary School in Bodiya Ki Dhani, Rajasthan and urged the school staff to help him apply. So while he managed his work in school during the day, his nights would be spent staying awake and preparing for the upcoming Teacher Selection Test. Passing the examination with flying colours, Maliram Bunkar was appointed a teacher of Mathematics and English at the Satya Bharti School in Bodiya Ki Dhani.

Maliram completed three years as a teacher in February 2012, an ideal role model for the children proving that perseverance, determination and hard work can pave the way to realize a long cherished dream.



*From a school guardian to teacher,
Maliram is a story of success*

Defying the Age Barrier

Shri Sriram Meghwal
Support to: Satya Bharti School, Sopara
Jodhpur (District), Rajasthan

At the age of 85, when most people have long retired from their worldly duties, Sriram Meghwal is still busy fulfilling his responsibilities. Having lost his son to an untimely death, he is now the sole guardian of his three grandchildren.

Early every morning, Sriram accompanies his grandchildren, Raziya, Sharda and Bhaskar to the Satya Bharti School in Sopara, Rajasthan and also picks them up after school. On most days, with his grandchildren in school, he engages himself in looking around the school and helping with little chores. On one such occasion, he noticed that the saplings planted in front of the school by the students were being destroyed by cattle and stray animals. He knew he would not be able to keep guard each day because of his other commitments and with no boundary wall, the school lay open to the encroachment of animals and human beings alike. This made him deeply concerned about the safety of the school's properties and the students and Shri Meghwal made up his mind to build a boundary wall for the school.

Despite his age, Meghwal started giving shape to his decision. He would search for and gather rocks and stones suited for construction from the village. After transporting it to the school, he would work for eight hours a day putting together the collected material, in the scorching heat of Rajasthan. This continued for a few days in spite of passers-by often sneering at his efforts. But overtime, watching him go about his work singlehandedly, Meghwal soon earned himself a group of supporters, motivated by his undeterred hard work to contribute towards the school. Over the next six months, Sriram, together with the support of the school and people from the community, toiled continuously to provide the Satya Bharti School in Sopara with a 'rock-strong' boundary wall, now a permanent and protective feature of the school.

“His dedication is unbelievable. No one even thought about it; and he did it without expecting anyone to help or contribute. Even at this age his stamina beats us all and he is never sitting idle.”

–Mr. Sheraram Godara, Head Teacher, Satya Bharti School, Sopara



Meghwal singlehandedly built the school wall, 900 feet long and five feet high



Practicing together forged strong ties between the students of the Satya Bharti School and the Government Senior Secondary School in Hambran

The Backbone of Success

Village Community
Support to: Satya Bharti School, Hambran
Ludhiana (District), Punjab

In spite of various ground challenges, the village communities have always stood up to the needs of the Satya Bharti Schools. One such example of unwavering support has been of the village community of Hambran in Punjab.

The students of the Satya Bharti School in Hambran, having recently won the Satya Bharti School cluster level *kho-kho* competition, were getting ready for the district level tournament. However, the lack of a suitable opponent team was proving to be a big dampener as the students were not being able to train better by playing against other teams. Hearing about this issue, the teachers of the nearby Government Senior Secondary School in the village stepped in and offered their own school team and sports teacher to help the Satya Bharti School students practise and hone their skills for the upcoming tournament. These daily practices not only enhanced the team's performance, but also strengthened ties between both the schools and fostered a sense of healthy competition in the students.

In another recent incident, community members came together to support the school when it was being upgraded to the elementary level. While the people of the village had aspirations of higher education for their children, they did not know how this could be achieved after their children passed out of Class V of the Satya Bharti School in Hambran. However, with the school now having classes up to standard VIII, children would not have to travel to another village for further studies nor drop out of school. Thus wanting to make the best of this opportunity, the community decided to provide all possible help to the upgradation process. As construction work began for the new classes, the villagers saw that the school was facing problems transporting materials to the site as there was no direct motorable road to the school. They immediately took up the matter with the Panchayat and deliberated on possible alternatives. Shri Sukhdev, the Sarpanch of Hambran, stepped in with a solution and opened up a road adjacent to the village veterinary hospital, which had been lying unused for a long time, for easy transport of materials to the school. This eased the issues faced by the school and also ensured that work was not stopped.

The Satya Bharti School in Hambran, Punjab with the village community's constant support has become a testimony of the successful symbiotic relation that can exist between the schools and the communities in which it works in rural India today.

"If the Satya Bharti School in Hambran is being upgraded to help the children of our village, then this was the least I could do for our school."

- Shri Sukhdev, Sarpanch of Hambran

Stretching Beyond Limits

Village Community
Support to: Satya Bharti Schools
in Haryana

In the Satya Bharti Schools, various issues have been resolved because the village communities have taken up the responsibility. In Haryana, they challenged the acute shortage of electricity that hampered education in the Satya Bharti Schools.

At the Satya Bharti Schools, computer education forms a core curricular component in the delivery of quality education, helping children develop 21st century skills. However, as is the condition in most villages of India, the villages of Kohrar, Babroli, Bithla, Sunderheti, Khairana, Mohanpur and Mori in Haryana too faced extreme shortage of electricity, a major deterrent to computer education.

While during school events community members would see students display their computer skills and knowledge, they were also aware that children could not fully utilize its benefits because of acute shortage of electricity in the schools. Available only for three hours every alternate day, with the voltage often being too low to operate the computers, parents saw their children dejected at being unable to use the colourful machines in their classrooms.

The village communities in Haryana have guaranteed that students enjoy their computer classes without hindrance



Realizing the need to address this gap, the village communities of Kohrar, Babroli, Bithla, Sunderheti, Khairana, Mohanpur and Mori took up the responsibility of resolving this issue. They knew that little could be done to change the structural condition of non availability of electricity in the villages and would thus have to find an alternative. After much deliberation with the Panchayat of the respective villages, the communities decided to procure power backup systems for the schools. However, with most of the people in these villages living under poor economic conditions, the plan now faced a serious dearth of funds. But community members would not let their financial limitations be roadblocks to their children's education and therefore went door-to-door seeking people's contributions to the best of their capacities. While stretching beyond the limited means of the villagers, the communities finally succeeded in collecting enough money to purchase inverters for the schools, thus providing them with unhindered power supply.

It is because village communities have always stood up to the needs of the program that students in the Satya Bharti Schools can make full use of the resources available at the schools and learn better.

“The donation of the inverter has enhanced our students' interest in computer lessons and has also motivated teachers to try new things like developing digital lessons and presentations.”

**– Mr. Anil Kumar, Head Teacher,
Satya Bharti School, Kohrar**



Leading in Belief

Mr. Farooq Abdullah

**Support to: Satya Bharti School, Chargachi
Murshidabad (District), West Bengal**

Mr. Farooq Abdullah could have moved in to his new house with his family, but instead, offered it to run the Satya Bharti School in Chargachi for a year, believing that it would make a difference in the lives of the children in his village.



Farooq has been an unwavering support to the program newly launched in West Bengal

When the Satya Bharti School was launched in the Chargachi village of West Bengal, there were several apprehensions surrounding the program. A private rural education initiative driven towards quality education was a new experience for the community and there was no surety as to how the program would be viewed and received.

It was at this nascent stage of the initiative that Mr. Farooq Abdullah, a resident of Chargachi village, stepped in to support the program only hearing what it aims to deliver. With years of experience of being a teacher himself, at a government school in Murshidabad, Mr. Farooq understood the philosophy and quality education intent of the Satya Bharti School Program and that it had the potential to change the lives of the children in his village.

Mr. Abdullah realized that for the program to be successful, it would need the support of the entire community. He therefore took up the responsibility of being the ambassador of the Satya Bharti School in the community by sharing the program's vision with his fellow residents and ensuring that the community would be closely associated with and involved in the functioning of the school. It was also during this time that he heard about the Satya Bharti School looking for a temporary space to run the program from till the school-building was constructed. After years of saving his hard earned money, Mr. Farooq had built a house for himself in Chargachi and was ready to move in a few days. Eager that the school start immediately, he instantly offered his newly constructed house, free of any charge, to run the school while continuing to live in a rented accommodation himself for another year. While the school has now shifted to its own building, Mr. Abdullah still remains eager to provide any help that the school might need.

Mr. Farooq Abdullah's contribution has instilled amongst the people of Chargachi village, a sense of belief in the program. Today, the village community is closely associated with the school and the program at large, assured that the school will pave the way for a better and brighter future for their children.

“The whole village believes that the schools will be a good experience for our children. So I had no qualms about offering my house to run the school for a year.”

– Mr. Farooq Abdullah, Resident of Chargachi Village



Jyoti Yadav received the award from (L-R) Dr. Pramath Sinha, Founder and MD, 9.9 Mediaworx Pvt. Ltd., Mr. Pavan Dhamija, MD and CEO, DLF Pramerica and Prof. Yash Pal, Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

National Honoree: Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards 2012

Jyoti Yadav

Student of Class VII, Satya Bharti Government Upper Primary School, Dabadwas Alwar (District), Rajasthan

Jyoti Yadav, a student of Class VII at the Satya Bharti Government Upper Primary School in Dabadwas, Rajasthan was recognized as one of the two National Honorees at the Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards 2012 for her campaign addressing the issue of **'Respect for Widows in Society'**. Chosen from over 3000 students participating in the contest from all over the country, Jyoti will now represent India at Washington D.C in May 2012 at the felicitation event for Spirit honorees from across the globe.

After the death of her father in 2010, Jyoti realized the humiliation and disrespect that widows face in society. She and her mother, left with no means of livelihood, had to depend on others for donations to sustain themselves. Already traumatized by this, Jyoti also witnessed the discriminatory behavior her mother faced, now that she was a widow, at the hands of relatives and community members. Hitting so close to home, Jyoti decided to fight for the rights of widowed women in the village.

Jyoti visited the Sarpanch of the village, Smt. Bhagwati Devi, and requested her support in eliminating this evil from their society. Hearing her plea, Smt. Bhagwati discussed the issue with the Panchayat and the Gram Sabha, urging people to rid their village of this taboo. Jyoti, strengthened with the support of the village administration, went door to door making people aware of the plight of widows in the village and requesting for their support. While she initially faced a lot of resentment and humiliation for daring to take up such a sensitive issue, her efforts finally paid off and she was able to gradually convert staunch conformists to start mainstreaming such women into normal life. She even convinced the Panchayat to provide widows with jobs so that they do not have to live off donations. With the first to benefit being her mother, Jyoti's mother, Kamlesh is now employed as the Main In-charge of the Anganwadis in her village.

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Editorial Team: **Rituparna Sengupta, Samreen Ghauri, Diana B. Dixit**

Please send your feedback and suggestions at:

Bharti Foundation, Wing A, Upper Ground Floor, Plot No. 16, Udyog Vihar, Phase IV, Gurgaon - 122015

E-mail: communication.foundation@bhartifoundation.org

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