

New Schools Partnership

Improving teaching, learning and infrastructure

The Kusuma Trust (The Trust) has embarked on a new project, the Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative (KSPI), with 25 secondary schools in Sambalpur, Odisha, and 25 secondary schools in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh. The aim is to raise student attainment, improve teaching standards and enhance the physical school environment. The five-year project focuses on the professional development of teachers, building the capacity of Headteachers, learning materials and resources for students, construction and maintenance of school facilities and access to clean water. The Trust has made a grant to the Kusuma Foundation (KF) to implement this project.

KF has established local offices in Sambalpur and Hardoi to support the project. These offices host a resource centre which provides training and access to a library and computer suite with internet access. The resource centres will also offer educational workshops, films and events for students, teachers, parents and the community.

On 26 July 2013, The Trust participated in a meeting with the Headteachers of the 25 schools in Sambalpur. The meeting gave Headteachers an opportunity to consider their priorities for school improvement and discuss how these can be supported. The Headteachers welcomed the sharing of good practice through such meetings.

The KF local teams have a schedule of visits to the schools in the two districts to meet Headteachers and School Management and Development Committees (SMDCs) to finalise individual school improvement plans. These plans will help Headteachers develop a list of priorities for their schools, specifying how and where SMDCs, government, local communities and The Trust will contribute.

KSPI Key objectives

- Raising pupil attainment and exam performance
- Building the capacity of school principals and Headteachers to inspire and support change
- Improving and modernising teaching and learning resources and practices
- Creating a community of schools and educators that model, sustain and expand good practice

Dr Balwant Singh, Chief Executive of The Trust, on a recent visit to several of the schools noted that *“Headteachers in these schools face immense challenges. However, their enthusiasm and motivation to improve teaching and learning are very encouraging as we work in partnership to bring about lasting improvements”*.



Students from Sasan High School, one of the 25 KSPI Schools in Sambalpur. Photo: Kusuma Trust

More teachers and infrastructure are a priority

Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative

The priorities for project schools are the recruitment of teachers and improvements to facilities. Inadequate teachers in schools means large class sizes and a rather difficult teaching and learning environment. Toilets in disrepair, a lack of desks and chairs in classrooms and the need for a boundary wall around the school are other priorities.



Classrooms in Tariwan High School, Hardoi have a clear need for improved facilities. Photo: Kusuma Trust

Head teacher makes a difference

Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative

Mr R. K. Rao, Head teacher of Tariwan High School in Hardoi, has filled a number of teacher vacancies in his school with support from the local community. Mr Rao is responsible for a school of 2,000 students with 19 sanctioned teaching posts but only 7 teachers available. At a recent planning meeting, Mr Rao highlighted the importance of working with an active and engaged SMDC and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to address staff shortages. With SMDC and PTA financial support the school secured additional funds for substitute teachers to fill vacant posts. The Trust is working with schools such as Tariwan High School to ensure there is community involvement in schools and that funding is available to address teacher shortages.



Kusuma staff meeting with Mr R. K. Rao.
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

Parent gets children back to school

Centre for Youth and Social Development

A parent in the Dhankauda block of Sambalpur, Odisha, has successfully encouraged six children from her village to go to school. Ms Manjeet Kaur, an active member of the Gosala High School SMDC, demonstrated how community involvement in SMDC meetings and local women's self help groups can make a difference. Ms Kaur organised a community rally and encouraged her neighbours to send their children to school by highlighting the importance of education for their families' future. The Centre for Youth and Social Development is working closely with schools and communities in the district to ensure that more parents follow Ms Kaur's lead and play an active part in the education of their children.

New district staff

Kusuma Foundation

In July, KF welcomed local teams in the KF State offices. The teams, based in the districts of Sambalpur in Odisha and Hardoi in Uttar Pradesh will work closely with schools involved in the KSPI and provide direct support to Kusuma grantees in the two districts.