



Transforming lives through education

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Students in Focus

Resource Centres expand opportunities for learning

The Kusuma Trust UK (The Trust) has funded the establishment of two Kusuma Resource Centres (KRC) in Uttar Pradesh and Odisha to expand educational opportunities. Each Centre has a library and computer suite with internet access and offers training, educational workshops and courses for students, teachers, parents and the wider community.

The Centres are part of the Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative which supports 50 schools to improve the quality of education and increase the number of young people completing secondary school, embarking on higher education and gaining employment.

In February, the Centre in Hardoi held a two-day Science workshop in collaboration with Regional Science City¹. Ninety seven students from 12 schools conducted experiments to gain a better understanding of scientific theories on topics such as space, pollution, computers, electronics, the environment and biology. Feedback from students was positive and they appreciated the opportunity to interact with experts.

At the Centre in Sambalpur, 40 students from Classes 9 and 10 participated in a course on computing and internet skills and were introduced to open source learning

materials. The course included lessons on Microsoft Word, Microsoft Power Point and using the internet. An English course was held for another 80 students to improve their English speaking and listening skills. The course improved students' confidence through presentations, storytelling and role-plays.

At the Government Inter College Hardoi, 95 students and 8 teachers from neighbouring schools attended a talk on the impact of climate change on the environment. Students had the opportunity to learn about global warming and to ask questions about changes in the environment and its effects on our planet.

The Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative also supports student cabinets, which consist of elected student representatives in each school, to create wall displays in classrooms that are linked to subject curricula. Maps, scientific diagrams and pictures were displayed in classrooms and are now being used by students.

The Trust is continuing to explore new ways to raise attainment, reduce absenteeism in schools and enable young people in Sambalpur and Hardoi to realise their full potential.



Students using a computer at the Kusuma Resource Centre in Sambalpur, Odisha.
Photo: Sam Strickland

As part of the Kusuma Schools Partnership Initiative, the Kusuma Resource Centres offer new opportunities which aim to broaden horizons for young people and promote the use of technology and other educational resources.

¹ <http://www.rsclucknow.org>

Teaching at the right level

Researchers affiliated with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)² have launched over a hundred randomised impact evaluations globally to test what works, and what does not, in improving education. Established in 2003, J-PAL has conducted many of these evaluations in India with various implementing partners, including State governments and NGOs such as Pratham³.

One of the lessons from the evaluations is that teaching at the learning level of the child rather than the government-prescribed syllabus for that class is consistently successful in raising student attainment. Tracking and grouping students by initial learning level, rather than age or grade, can provide the basis for more focused tuition to the lowest performing children. The evaluations also suggest that 'learning camps' can help develop basic skills for weaker students outside of the standard curriculum.

The Trust has drawn on evidence from these evaluations to fund Agranee Jana Kalyan Anusthan to carry out remedial teaching in English and Mathematics for 4,000 students in 25 schools in Sambalpur. The teaching takes place in schools before and after the school day and is tailored to students' individual learning levels. Specialised English and Mathematics resources have been created for students in Classes 8 and 9 to coach them on difficult areas of the curricula, develop their critical thinking skills and improve academic performance.



An English teacher at Gokulananda High School, Sambalpur.
Photo: Sam Strickland

Kusuma supports remedial teaching to improve the performance of 4,000 secondary students in English and Mathematics in Sambalpur, Odisha.

² <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/education>

³ <http://www.pratham.org>

⁴ <http://www.readglobal.org>

⁵ <http://cis-india.org>

⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/ke37ylq>

Library management for Teachers

In February, 19 Head teachers and teachers participated in school library management training at the Kusuma Resource Centre in Hardoi. The training was organised in partnership with Rural Education and Development India⁴, a non-profit organisation which empowers rural communities through educational resources and training.



Teachers participating in library management training at the KRC, Hardoi.
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

The training covered a range of topics to improve the effective use of libraries in schools, including how to encourage more students to use the library, the processing of books and book selection to ensure students read the most relevant and up-to-date materials.

Following the training, a number of Head teachers have already established libraries and book banks in their schools. Mr. Birendra Kumar, the head teacher of Adarsh Inter College Thamarwa did not have a dedicated room for a library but realised that the lack of space should not stop the school from opening a library and lending books to students. Mr. Kumar converted part of the head teacher's room into a library with furniture and a supply of books funded by The Trust. Regular library periods are now part of the school timetable.

CIS recognised by Forbes India

Forbes India has recognised the positive impact of the Centre for Internet and Society⁵ (CIS) and particularly its Policy Director, Pranesh Prakash⁶. The annual '30 under 30' lists a new generation of influential and enterprising Indians. Prakash is prominent in the area of freedom of expression, internet governance, intellectual property and copyright. Prakash's efforts have resulted in changes to copyright laws so that books can be converted into accessible formats for the blind and visually impaired and he has successfully campaigned against the privatisation of publicly funded intellectual property.

The Trust funds the research and policy work of CIS to reform copyright law, implement electronic accessibility standards and issues relating to freedom of expression, privacy, accessibility for people with disabilities and access to knowledge and openness.