

Kusuma School and Teacher Awards

Promoting excellence in teaching and learning

Annual Kusuma School and Teacher Awards were given to schools and teachers at ceremonies in Sambalpur on 30 October and in Hardoi on 3 November.

Every year the Kusuma School and Teacher Awards programme identifies and rewards teachers and schools who achieve excellence in teaching and demonstrate this through the performance of their students in examinations. Teachers receive a cash prize and support for their professional development. Schools receive a cash award for development of the school.

This year, 47 teachers (16 in Sambalpur and 31 in Hardoi) and 14 government and government-aided schools (8 in Sambalpur and 6 in Hardoi) were awarded prizes, honouring their efforts and the hard work that teachers and schools put into furthering their pupils' achievements. Thirty nine students in Sambalpur and 46 students in Hardoi with the highest scores in Classes 8, 9 and 10 annual examinations received awards.

Over 620 delegates attended the two award ceremonies, including officials from the District Administration and Education departments, District Magistrates, Head teachers and teachers, representatives from local NGOs

and local partners of Kusuma. The key speech in Sambalpur was given by Dr. Chitta Ranjan Tripathy, designated Vice Chancellor of Sambalpur University, and in Hardoi by the Chief Guest, Mr. Ramesh Mishra (IAS), District Magistrate.

Recalling his own experience, Dr Tripathy acknowledged and recognised teachers for their dedication and hard work, and the contribution they make to the growth of their students:

"I urge schools and teachers to continue to be resourceful and transparent as students need to acquire both knowledge and values from their institutions of learning. I also urge all students to not only aim for higher education but also the social development this can bring to the community. I congratulate Kusuma for their excellent work."

Mr Mishra, who presented the awards in Hardoi, said:

"The standard of educational attainment in Hardoi district is very low. I congratulate Kusuma for inspiring teachers to strive for better results through the awards programme. As educators we all have a responsibility to the district and owe it to work for the community at large."

Sasmita Pradhan, a Science teacher from GC High School in Rairakhol, Sambalpur, won a Kusuma Teacher Award and said:

"In my 15 years of service as a teacher, this is the first time that I have been rewarded. This makes me feel very proud. I am elated and want to dedicate this award to my students, as it is due to their performance that I have received this recognition. I am very thankful to Kusuma for recognising my hard work and efforts."

At the School and teacher awards in Hardoi, the first cohort of 100 new Kusuma Excellence Fellows attended an oath-taking ceremony and will receive funding to continue their secondary education and pursue higher education.



Bharati Behera, winner of the Best Student in Class 8 Award
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

Kusuma Excellence Fellowship

A new fellowship programme was launched by Kusuma in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh. Each year the Kusuma Excellence Fellowship (KEF) will support 100 meritorious students from poor families in Hardoi to complete secondary school and pursue higher and professional education. Selection of the first cohort of Fellows was completed in October 2014. From 463 applications, 100 Fellows were selected for the programme based on written tests, an examination, home visits and interviews.

The Fellows each receive a stipend and ongoing academic support, including seminars on a range of topics such as career guidance and public speaking in English, one-to-one mentoring, pastoral care and the opportunity to discuss academic and personal issues.

Fellows participated in an oath-taking ceremony where they were encouraged by Mr. Mishra, District Magistrate of Hardoi:

“You should make getting a good quality of education your primary goal, and remain focused on what changes you can bring to every aspect of your life. Education is almost like doing social work through your life, we can all contribute to society in many different capacities only if we are well educated.”

Kusuma Fellow pursues her dream

Shivani Gupta lives in Hardoi city and attends Beni Madhav Balika Vidhyapeeth Inter College, Hardoi. She is one of the 100 new Fellows who have been awarded the KEF. Shivani dreams of becoming an engineer but as the oldest of three siblings felt she could not burden her father with her education expenses and was going to choose Arts in Class II to avoid any tuition-related expenses. Shivani had previously sought financial support but found there were very few opportunities for students belonging to the ‘general caste’.

After being selected for the KEF, Shivani said:

“I am very happy that Kusuma provides equal opportunities to all students who belong to economically deprived families. Getting more information, resources and study support from Kusuma is really exciting, especially the opportunity to learn computer skills. I got to learn about the Kusuma Excellence Fellowship through my school. Without the support of this Fellowship I would be in an Arts class, but as a result I can now pursue whatever dream I want.”

With encouragement from her father and the financial support of the KEF she has enrolled in Science classes to achieve her ambitions of becoming an engineer.



Kusuma Staff and Kusuma Excellence Fellows at the oath-taking ceremony in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

Kusuma Ratna Fellowship

The Kusuma Ratna Fellowship (KRF), implemented by Sambalpur Integrated Development Institute in Odisha, has supported 600 Fellows in six cohorts since 2008. Nineteen Fellows from cohorts one to six recently met to discuss how the programme has made a difference to their lives.

All Fellows appreciate the ‘Fellow’ tag given to them among their peers and said that it improves their self-esteem and confidence. All Fellows said they enjoy the mentoring and life-skills support they receive and that it is critical in shaping their personal development and helping them make informed choices about their future. All value the financial and emotional support they receive and want to personally extend similar support to others who are deserving and needy. A few of the Fellows, while talking about their aspirations and future plans, said that they would like to donate a part of their future salary towards the education and development of other students.

A recent evaluation of the KRF programme conducted by the London School of Economics supported the feedback of the Fellows. The evaluation highlighted that the programme has a positive impact with Fellows having greater confidence, higher aspirations and an improved understanding of the importance of education to succeed in life for themselves, their families and friends.