

Speech by Smt. D. Purandeswari, MoS-HRD (HE) presenting 'The Commonwealth Education Good Practice Awards 2006' to 'Care India' On 28th Feb, 2007
In New Delhi.

I am extremely happy to be present here at this function which has been arranged for presenting to Care India which has won for the 3rd prize in the Commonwealth Education Good Practice Awards 2006. The award has been presented to Care India on account of their project, "Advancing Lessons from Udaan – Addressing Challenges faced by Vulnerable Children". My heartiest congratulations to M/s. Kokila Gulati Care India for receiving this prestigious Award.

Udaan is a residential accelerated of learning programme of Care India for girls in the age group of 10-14 years who have either never gone to school or have dropped out of school. It is implemented in a remote block of Uttar Pradesh. Its innovative curriculum design, community interface mechanisms and social learning curriculum have been extended to government programmes. The social learning package with its emphasis on gender equity and diversity has been introduced in formal schools. The girls are selected from rural areas where many social barriers such as caste and low status for women compel them to live a rather restricted life. This scheme is so designed that these girls were able to complete their primary education in a period of eleven months. The aim of the programme is to provide an opportunity to girls who have missed the bus to complete primary school education. Not only did the programme provide an education equivalent to grade V of formal school but also

provided them with social education that helps build an independent personality with critical capacities to discern and decide.

Democratic values are central to the programme; learning is considered meaningful when girls get an opportunity to construct their own knowledge. On one hand, the Environment and relationships at the camp were to be enabling and on the other, the Curriculum too is influenced to provide a holistic and sensitive experience. The progress has now been implemented over six years. The girls complete primary schooling equivalent to the curriculum of the government formal schools and also go through a social learning curriculum during the camp. Each year a group of 100 such girls from a rural block of Hardoi district were enrolled in this programme.

It is encouraging to know that though initially there existed a need to mobilize the parents and girls to enroll into the residential camp, from the second year onwards, confidence and articulation of the girls learning and examination results at the end of the first camp served to motivate many others and the numbers of parents wanting to sending their girls to such camps increased three fold. Also, the girls themselves played the role of catalytic agents for change.

It was indeed thoughtful on the part of Care India to provide a holistic education, rather than academic alone. Curriculum was structured grade wise. Other than the core subjects of language, mathematics, and environmental science, the camp also included a social learning curriculum which essentially aimed at the girls developing a broader

world view as well as a forum for critically examining many social issues. Within a broad framework of relationships and inter-relationships, which examined areas of self and society, specific themes were identified around which exploration and enquiry was structured.

I am glad to know that in terms of achievements, each year about 98% girls would stay through the year. Of the 98% girls who stayed, about 99% girls successfully cleared the government school examinations of class V. Along side a remarkable change was witnessed in the appearance of the girls. When they joined the camp, many looked malnourished, but at the end of the camp almost all of them looked healthy, active and alert. From being shy, timid, unsure of themselves the girls were transformed into self confident, articulate individuals, full of enthusiasm. A keen desire amongst the girls to continue their education was marked feature at the end of each camp. About 80% of the girls enroll for further education in grade VI. This is considered a major achievement, as otherwise the options left to them would be to probably get married or participate in activities that contribute to the household income. Since girls of different castes and religions lived together in the camp, they learnt to understand and appreciate each other, by casting aside their caste, community or religious barriers.

All in all 'Udaan' which literally means flight served to provide wings, through the residential primary education initiative, for about 500 girls in the age group 10-14 who had either dropped out or had never

been to the schools to fly back to the fold of education. This has been a successful venture in the cause of female education and I would welcome more and more such N.G.Os and Voluntary organizations to take up the initiative for starting such bold ventures to address the challenges faced by the girls and other socially vulnerable children. May I assure you all on behalf of the Government that such activities by civil societies will have our support and encouragement.

We shall see whether the possibility of instituting awards/prizes by the Ministry of HRD to encourage the NGOs and voluntary organizations to take up such result -oriented projects could be considered, so as to foster the growth of education of the girl child.

With these words I once again congratulate M/s Kokila Gulati of the Care India on their wonderful performance which has rightly received acclaim and won award at the Commonwealth Education Ministers' Conference 2006.

Jai Hind.

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