

Kajal

Her failed dream prompts her to work for realizing the dreams of others



In accordance with the 'Right to Education Act, 2009', the government has given the mandate to enroll all children as per their current age and since then the schools are strictly following the mandate. But, children who live in slums and squatter colonies of metropolitan cities like Kolkata, neither do they have the basic education nor the capacity to cope with the present academic standards. In this situation, DRCSC and Save the Children started a project entitled "Ensuring Quality Education" in 2017. In 25 urban schools and surrounding areas, this project aimed at those children who were lagging behind the standards. To be more effective and constructive, the facilitators identified some community volunteers from the local areas. Here is a living example of such a dedicated volunteer whose activities have left an indelible impression in the minds of the community.

Bastuhara Vidyapith is one of the oldest schools in Kulia Tangra locality. It is one of the schools among the 25 schools under this project. Kajal Ghosh started working with DRCSC as a community volunteer from August, 2017. Living in her maternal house, Kajal strongly aspired to work for the betterment of the children of her community. As she had studied in Baastuhara School till Standard V, she had a deep nostalgic attachment with this school. But from the beginning, Kajal had to cross or negotiate many hurdles.

Kajal lives in 6/1 Mathur Babu Lane, Kolkata 700 015. Unlike the other lone children of their parents, unfortunately Kajal was deprived of the affection, care and love from her parents that she deserved. Right from her early childhood, she was exposed to domestic violence in her family. Her father Tapan Ghosh worked as a daily labour in a plastic company. He had no actual place for dwelling and he resorted to binge drinking regularly. So Kajal and her mother had to live in her maternal house looked down upon as pitiable creatures by the other inmates of the family. Her mother Chandana Ghosh works as a domestic help.



After completing the fifth standard from Bastuhara Vidyapith, Kajal joined Shanti Sangha School for Girls for upper primary education. While studying in upper primary she found there were so many struggling peers like her. She tried herself, taking support from some sympathetic teachers to complete her Madhyamik Examination but she could not clear it. She wished to appear another time in the following

year of 2016, but destiny something else to say. Her dream which she had cherished all through her life remained unfulfilled. Then she determined to try her level best for the retention of other children in her locality. After getting dropped out of school, she started to work as a daily labour in a factory where she cuts leather strips. Now she earns about Rs.700/- per month.



When she was fourteen years old, she and other peers of her age had formed a group. They organized a 'sit and draw' competition with local children. They bore the expenses from the savings they made from the money they had for buying refreshments. They collected mattresses from the houses in the locality to organize that event. Crayons, pencils and tiffin boxes were given away to the participants as a token of appreciation.

In 2017, DRCS's facilitator met her when she was trying to find a way for working with the under privileged children. Both of them worked with other volunteers hand in hand for enrolment as well as retention of every child in school.

Kajal organized and facilitated meetings and FGDs with community people on the issues of basic health and hygiene, education, proper sanitation, school readiness etc. She also teaches the children regularly in the 'Mobile Learning Centre'. Her participation in 'Community Volunteers Meet' is also worth mentioning. Others also drew inspiration from her exemplary role towards the community.

With a few young peers of her age, Kajal endeavored to form a group namely "Amra Sabai". All the members of the group share a commonality that they all are aspirant of receiving vocational training.

"I would extend my cooperation and help to everyone who wishes to work for the betterment of our locality". ~ Kajal