



# Transforming Lives through Education

**Kusuma Trust UK & London School of Economics and Political Science**

*Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011  
The India Habitat Centre, New Delhi*

**India  
Observatory**

## **Summary Report**

The Seminar, attended by 75 invited participants, was opened by Udit Das, Country Leader of Kusuma Foundation, who welcomed everyone and introduced the keynote speaker.

### **Overview**

Mr Vineet Joshi the Chair of the Central Board of Secondary Education, focused on the need for the education system to respond to the needs of India's rapidly changing society. The government is interested in educational reforms introducing grades to replace annual examinations.

Dr Balwant Singh, CEO of Kusuma Trust UK, described the country's efforts made in primary education and emphasised the need to focus greater attention on secondary and higher education. The Kusuma Trust believes that every young person has the potential to change their life by completing their education so the Trust's new strategy focuses on secondary and tertiary education and will be rigorously monitored and the outcomes evaluated.

Dr Sunil Batra, the Education Director of Shikshantar School spoke about secondary education in India, describing it as a non-enabling system where children pass exams without being able to read and write. There is a need to ensure purposeful learning and construct knowledge. Examinations are not the only way to assess knowledge and remedial education needs more emphasis. Vocational teaching is important for children. For these changes to occur, teacher training must be improved.

### **Research Awards**

The Kusuma Young Researcher Awards are a way to support bright students and help them to succeed. The 2010 winner was Dr Chandrani Dasgupta, whose study focused on the resilience of children living in politically unstable Kashmir. The aspects explored were their resilience and vulnerability.

Mr Javaid Rashid, the runner up, presented his work based on children in the conflict zone in Kashmir. His study focused on torture and detention. He showed that when children are exposed to adversity they use their own agency and perspectives to cope.

### **Kusuma Fellowships**

Dr Sandra Sequeira (London School of Economics), presented the findings of the impact evaluation of the Kusuma Udyan Shalini Fellowships. Findings include:

- Fellows perform better than non-recipients
- Time spent in studies is higher by Fellows than non-recipients
- Higher probability that the Fellows will continue to higher education
- Fellows valued education more
- Fellows believed their income would be greater whilst non-recipients underestimated their future income
- Fellowship recipients valued the support they received from their mentors

### **Other scholarship programmes in India**

Prof Avtar Singh, Head of the Department of Educational Management and Evaluation at the National Council of Educational Research and Training, talked about the provision of scholarships providing INR 6,000 per annum under the National Talent Search established in 1963. Scholarships are provided from Class 10 up to PhD. The Scholarships are open to anyone in India with the focus on the most disadvantaged and differently abled. Examinations are conducted for visually impaired students in braille and other tactile formats. Local languages are no barrier to receiving a scholarship. There has been no outcome evaluation of this programme.

Mr. Vivek Mansukhani from the Ford Foundation described the programme of funding launched in 2001 and finishing with the current cohort. The programme has funded world-class international education in the social sciences. Three hundred and thirty Fellows have received generous stipends to study at the most prestigious universities across the world with mentors to support them. The outcomes show that significant investment in individuals can result in social as well as individual transformation.

Mr. Manoj Puthiyaram from the Azim Premji University described the Foundation's new initiative in which scholarships are provided as well as student loans through links with financial institutions. The Foundation believes nobody should be denied a university education because of economic reasons.

### **Kusuma Fellowships**

Four young Kusuma Fellows shared their experiences.

Chinatalli Nyna said that the fellowship has helped her achieve her goals. The mentoring process was very good and has helped her be a good person in academic studies as well as encouraging her to have a more outgoing personality.

Kankati Meena said that every child wants to study but economic conditions do not always allow this. The availability of fellowships encouraged her to work hard to get one and since then she has been motivated to work hard. "Kusuma is supporting us and building our confidence in changing our lives."

Keniya Kaur said she is now giving back to society what she received. She came from an economically weak background and has managed to fulfill her dreams through education. She is from a Hindi medium school and the mentoring programme has encouraged her a lot and now her English is perfect. 'Thanks Udayan Care and Kusuma Trust to make us what we are today'.

Bhavani Shankar described conditions at home as being 'not good' but with support from Kusuma he can "realise his dreams." The support he has had, he said, not only helped educate him but has also built his confidence.

