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Parikrma: Where slum kids dare to dream big

Shukla Bose – a perfectly coiffured lady, gesticulating occasionally to drive home a point as she is chauffeured to her place of work – seems to fit the picture of a high flying CEO better than as a person passionate about making a difference to the lives of slum children. That she was a corporate head honcho at Resort Condominiums International, seems to have been in another life altogether as you see the reception she gets as she arrives at a modest building in Jayanagar (Bangalore). Almost instantly, she is surrounded by kids who dump their football to hug her. One carries away her purse, another, hurries with the folder, yet others tug at her saree. “You’ve got a new hairstyle, akka,” a girl remarks. Everyone giggles.

The building is painted in bright shades. Astronauts, musicians, animals and a gaint tree embossed with small, brown hands adorn the walls. “These hand prints,” points a proud Ms Bose, founder CEO, Parikrma Humanity Foundation,” are the hands of our children. These walls have been painted by them. ”On a school tour, we enter classes --- Mercury, Venus, Earth and Sun --- each filled with 25 odd kids and a teacher working at geography, mathematics, poetry and drama. The textbooks are missing but the classrooms are filled with pictures and paintings.

The 620 students in three Parikrma centers at Koramangala, Jayanagar, and Sahakarnagar are all slum-dwellers. Rag pickers, housemaids and tea-stall workers till a few months ago, they now lead sheltered lives during school hours and beyond. “We provide end-to-end solutions to our kids and take full responsibility of the child till he/she starts earning a living. We have identified four areas that make up a child’s life --- home, nutrition, health care, and education and development. We term this the circle of life. Special

attention is paid to kids who hail from disturbed families and may have been subject to violence,” explains Ms Bose.

As part of its comprehensive childcare approach, Parikrma’s mission is to provide underserved children equal opportunities and help them into the mainstream. Therefore, the school follows the ICSE curriculum and English as the language of instruction. Average attendance rate is 97% and the drop-out rate is less than 1%. Unlike most NGOs, Parikrma signs MOUs with its partners, is open to third party audits, has salaried employees on its rolls. It appeals to your power to create change with its ‘change your world in half a day’ programme. The strength of brand Parikrma lies in the efficient application of management systems that has, besides other pluses, converted into a generous flow of funds. Though it’s early to ask for success stories, Ms Bose recounts the day an ex-student came to negotiate his sister’s admission. “This means we have, in a way, succeeded to teach our kids freedom, dignity and courage to dream,” says Ms Bose.