

Half-a-days pay, but a big change for the children

IN its one year of existence, the Bangalore-based Parikrma Humanity Foundation has impacted three groups (if not more) of people at different levels: About 500 school dropouts, employees of 20 corporates and the team at Parikrma itself.

The 500 children are now in school and learning interesting things about Japan and Korea, speaking almost flawless English and are eating healthy nutritious food. All this has been possible thanks to half-a-day's salary contributed by the corporate citizens of the city. Says Mr Vivek Raju, Head, Marketing, Parikrma Foundation, "This is CSR (corporate social responsibility) with a different approach."

The Parikrma team realised that in India, it is difficult to appeal to guilt and most people were not moved by poverty because it has become a "part of our lives."

So the team decided to appeal to the executives differently: That they have the power to change someone's life by a small contribution: a half-a-day's salary.

"We need about Rs 15,000 per year to take care of a child's needs covering health, education, nutrition and community development And all they need to do is give up half a day's salary, i.e., about Rs 300."

In fact anybody who is part of the 'Change your world in half-a-day' becomes a Parikrma stakeholder.

Parikrma currently has three schools in Bangalore with students studying from kindergarten to Standard 6. And all three schools follow the ICSE curriculum, says Mr Raju.

Talking about the entire process of change that they are trying to bring about in Bangalore's slum children, Ms Shukla Bose, Founder and CEO of Parikrma, says, 'We begin with teaching them life skills: how to eat, dress, talk, " etc. Then the literary education begins.'

This model has enabled Parikrma teachers in engaging children at school, rather than coercing them into attending classes.

Ms Bose feels these children need to compete on equal terms with other children and they also need to be change agents in their own community. In fact, some fathers of these children are going through the de-addiction programme initiated by Parikrma.

The foundation takes care of the child's nutrition by providing three meals everyday. It also ensures that the child is administered all the necessary immunisation.

Talking about Parikrma's marketing experience, Ms Bose says she is overwhelmed by the response she has been getting from young Bangaloreans, while the lukewarm response by some older citizens and some large companies has been an 'eye opener.'

"I only think these companies and executives ought to give back something to the city that they are thriving in," she feels.

