

Circumstances cannot modify by themselves, conditions cannot improve without making a realisation and lives cannot change by just waving a magic wand. Dreams are seen but its actualisation has to be made.

Two years since its inception, The Al-Noor Trust, has come up with some dynamic changes for the uplift of the poor through its health and educational projects. Focusing on children and women, the catalysts of change, the founder of the Trust, Muhammad Shoaib, has actually made this dream come true for thousands of deprived inhabitants of Chak No. 10 Bolaghari, Tehsil Chunian of District Kasoor.

Monitoring social development

In the Trust's annual meeting on September 22nd, all the nineteen members present at the occasion expressed great satisfaction over the changes taken place. The number of children admitted to various classes rose from 250 to 350 in that small locality alone. While women engaged in stitching and embroidery training classes almost doubled. It was like setting a precedence for the rest.

Vocational training

Naziran bibi, in two months, picked up the techniques of stitching, and has become an earning hand. When the scribe personally visited her house, the condition, as cited by herself, had improved considerably. She has now bought a sewing machine, of her own, and her children are dressed up neatly in newly stitched clothes. Thanks to Al-Noor Trust, she gets orders from the city and contributes a good sum of Rs. 700 to her monthly family income. By saving her income, she has managed to get a room and a toilet constructed. For her family, things have surely changed for the better.

Apart from this the Trust is geared up to provide young men with vocational training. For those who want to seriously pursue academics, the construction of a separate boys high school is already underway. The emphasis remains on tutoring a particular skill. A boy who learns welding can easily earn thousands with a little investment. Such is the condition of poverty, as told by Muhammad Shoaib, that even a little money earned proves to be a great support for the family. In this regard, efforts were made to convince the owners of the textile mills, and ladies in Lahore to hire the services of women who are into stitching and tailoring.

Education

As for the standard of education is concerned, the results speak for



Children presenting tableau at Independence Day

'Children at our only ho

FATIMA IQBAL talks to the villagefolk of Bolaghari, Tehsil Chunian changed the lives of 350 families in just one year



Women engrossed in stitching

themselves. The first batch produced a hundred percent result and majority of the students in class eight scored a high first division. From this year, science group has been introduced and a science laboratory is already in

progress for which the Trust still requires funds. Although IT training might be a far fetched idea for students, but it seems that Al-Noor Trust is striving to actualise the dream as well. They have asked IT



covered area to 1100 sq. feet and added another storey to the building. Undoubtedly the building is one of its kind with its spacious corridors, classrooms and a big playground equipped with swings.

Truly speaking, a child playing seesaw was a fascinating site. When I approached him, he gave a smile and greeted me. Impressed by his behaviour, I asked a few questions and he intelligently answered them all. At the school, educating manners comes first. Toilet training, interacting with elders, teacher and class fellows is thought to be a necessary part of learning. Little boys and girls, dressed in school uniform would line-up to wash their hands before having lunch. According to teachers, it is difficult teaching them manners due to their family backgrounds but they still believe that, by the end of the day, these impressionable minds would definitely develop some civic sense.

The members of The Trust while addressing a gathering also stressed on the need of setting-up cottage industries. Developed countries throughout the world have invested in their cottage industries, thereby, eradicating poverty and putting a stop to rural migration. We, on the other hand, have overlooked the basic necessities of rural life which has resulted in abject poverty. Another advantage of cottage industries is to employ the available human and land

hospitals in critical conditions due to lack of timely medical aid or transport. We intend to provide a 24-hour ambulance service and set-up a dispensary on emergency basis," says Shoaib determinedly.

The Trust, usually, meets its expenses through funds and donations. Most of the teachers are either sponsored by members of the Trust or philanthropists but the help of donor agencies is still required. Where most of the NGOs have a work-force ranging into hundreds and draw millions from international donor agencies, this Trust has said to produce the desired results with very little resources. But what matters the most is any little contribution an individual can make. It could be financial, educational or physical assistance. For this reason, the members of the trust frequently arrange trips for professors and medical doctors to give awareness on basic health needs and solutions.

Occasionally children are taken to excursion trips. Recently school kids from class 1 to 5 were taken to Minar-e-Pakistan, Jehangir Fort and the zoo. The idea was to provide fun and learning in every possible way. Students are also taught the significance of important days. On 14th August students of class III presented a tableau. The stage, charts and preparation was done by the students. "It was the first time we were celebrating Independence Day at

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on how, Al-Noor Trust, has

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departments to donate their dated P-I computers for this purpose. In this regard some progress has been made. But more than that, the members of the Trust are proud of the fact that they have almost doubled the total



Members of the Trust at the annual meeting

resources for the betterment of villagefolk. Only if this idea materialises, which according to Mr. Shoaib would take time and investment, could lead to prosperity.

Health

Where education is a primary concern, the provision for proper health care has, now, become the focus of the Trust. The nearest dispensary or hospital lies at a distance of 14 km. "There have been cases when patients have reached city

the Trust and once I told the students about the importance of the day, they looked so enthusiastic. A week prior to 14th August, the children and teachers worked passionately. Women helped in stitching the costumes while the children rehearsed everyday," Mrs. Zeenat, the Headmistress of girls section said.

Our only hope are the children. They say, if we invest on them, we are investing in a bright future. ■

— Pix by Zahid Bashir