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Mala News

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An action programme for the elimination of child labour in rural India

Greetings!

What happened to my child?

One of the questions I am frequently asked by sponsors is what happened to the child I was sponsoring when they left Project Mala? It is also important to us to know that the children are benefiting from the education we provide. Below is one case study written by Anne Bate, a teaching adviser and Trustee of Project Mala.

Having worked with Project Mala regularly for the last eight years, it is rewarding to see the progress of the children as they pass through the school and embark on a career. The class 8 that I taught then were the first of our children to complete their education in a Project Mala school. Graduating from class 10 in our new secondary school in 2013, they are now young adults. Some are still studying, several have married and others are employed in a variety of jobs (one is a full time teacher with Project Mala).

One very successful young lady, Ranjana, landed a government job a year after finishing class 12. Ranjana had been accepted at university to study biology, but on leaving school had also applied for a highly prized vacancy with the department responsible for local government. The application procedure was very competitive: a tough exam, interview and medical, and the results would not be known for months. When, a year into her BSc course, she was offered the job, Ranjana didn't hesitate. Government jobs with their high salaries are much sought after and few turn them down. There is also a huge opportunity for promotion and advancement. Ranjana was quick to secure her career in a State government department. She transferred onto a BA correspondence course and became a 'Lekhpal' (a clerical government post).



Her job is to oversee three villages, keeping all the land registry records, verifying insurance claims, investigating land disputes, allocating government land, advertising and promoting government schemes, issuing income, caste and residence certificates, organising local elections, dealing with complaints and organising the government response in the case of disaster.

For such a young woman, it is no easy task to stand up to powerful local leaders who often try to bully or bribe to get their way. The work is demanding and involves considerable field work. Ranjana is a gentle girl, but cheerful and resilient, as I remember her at school. She was determined to enjoy the new job and does not allow any problem to overwhelm her. She told me that she faced many difficulties, but her managers always supported her. With the next round of general elections coming up next year, she now

has added responsibility for taking charge of ten election workers. As well as her heavy work load, Ranjana is determined to continue her studies. She has to pass some very competitive exams which could lead to employment in the top ranks of the Civil Service.

The impact of Ranjana's job on her family has been profound. The family are Dalits, belonging to the lowest caste and her father was in the past employed to whitewash the school buildings at Guria. Ranjana's position has brought them status and financial security. When I visited her home, she proudly showed me the new house that her father is building, which is a symbol of their new confidence and hope for the future.



This is one young lady who really has made the most of her education and makes the work we do so rewarding.

If you know anyone who might be interested in the newsletter please pass it on.

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