

Education officer renovates schools in the hills with her own salary

During inspection of a primary school in Tarikhet block of Almora district, Geetika Joshi, a deputy education officer, saw children shivering in the cold, as rainwater leaked from the rooftop of a classroom. It prompted her not just to repair the roof, but also renovate the entire school building with her own salary.

“School was in shabby condition and when I saw the children, I felt them like my own children. I immediately decided that I will get the roof repaired with my own salary. Later, I renovated the entire building with own money,” said Joshi, who joined at the deputy education officer in the Tarikhet block in March, 2015.

Now, she is working on a mission to transform other schools in the district. “After renovation of the school building, it came to my mind why I should not do the same work in other schools of the area, which are in dilapidated condition with the cooperation of teachers. I started motivating teachers and received overwhelming response from them. Initially, we collected Rs 2.5 lakh from teachers and started renovating school buildings, providing necessary infrastructure,” she said.

“We provided sweaters to the children of poor families. Since we thought a child can’t concentrate on the studies shivering in cold. Tarikhet is mountainous region and severe cold is witnessed there,” she said.

Talking about her new mission, Joshi said: “One day, Himanshu Khurana, an IAS officer presently posted as joint magistrate of Ranikhet, during a visit to one of transformed schools, asked us ‘How long you can do this with your own effort?’ and advised us to take cooperation from MLAs and businessmen for the public interest work.”

Under his guidance, ‘Roopantaran’ scheme was conceived and launched for the transformation of government schools and a bank account was opened in Ranikhet to seek monetary cooperation from people, Joshi said. “With the money, we started to provide necessary infrastructure, uniform, teaching material and better quality of education,” she added.

After the launch of the scheme, Joshi contacted Ranikhet MLA Karan Singh Mahra for his support and he sanctioned Rs 23 lakh from his MLA Fund for the noble cause. “Several schools were not only renovated (with the money), but also provided smart class equipment,” she said.

A few months ago former district magistrate Eva Ashish Srivastava also sanctioned ~12 lakh for Roopantaran. Impressed with the initiative, present district magistrate Nitin Bhadoriya is also supporting the cause.

Kamlesh Giri Goswami, the head mistress of Government Primary School at Garee, claimed, "Our primary school, after transformation, is not less any private school in term of infrastructure and quality education. It has also instilled confidence in our children."

Himanshu Khurana said, "When I joined as joint magistrate in Ranikhet in October 2017, initiative was on small scale. I brought it into the notice of former district magistrate Eva Ashish Srivastva, she pushed it and sanctioned budget from untied fund."

So far, 43 schools of Ranikhet and 14 schools of other areas in Almora district have been transformed. Joshi's efforts are increasing the strength of students in the schools.