

## For a Bigger and Better Life

While pursuing Gandhi Fellowship, Deepak Reddy decided to work on a small project in Gadchiroli. His main objective was to work with children to help them identify their career dreams and broaden their vision regarding education. During his field visits he interacted with several people across different age groups in order to know their perspective on the education system in villages. Through his research he came to know that most of the students either start working as daily wage labourers right after class 12<sup>th</sup> or choose to drop out of school after 10<sup>th</sup> standard. He noticed that there were hardly any people working as police or teachers in the village. He realised that lack of resources, guidance and unsupportive environment has not only blinkered their vision but has also never really allowed them to push their limits. He decided to introduce the children to different professions like doctor, scientist, pilot, engineer etc. He wanted to motivate them and help them to realise their capabilities to achieve anything they aspire for.

Deepak then got permissions to conduct interactive sessions in different schools for students of standard 3 to 7.



There, he asked the children to write a small composition about their aspirations and the reasons for their choices. During his discussions he came across a student named Meghraj, who wanted to be a farmer because he had seen his family suffering in the same field for years. He wanted to improve their living conditions by learning to use new agricultural equipment and technology. Deepak told him about more professions in the agricultural field. After this discussion Meghraj wrote in his composition that he aspires to become a *vaigyanik* (scientist). Just like Meghraj, there were many students who aspired to live a better life

but had never thought of exploring career options. After talking to the students he realised that they too have dreams but they need to widen their scope of choices which will only happen by exposing them to the professional world.

He shared his experience with his fellows and thought of arranging a field visit for the children. The fellows readily agreed to support him and helped him arrange a field visit to a hospital for the students. After getting all the formal permissions 24 students from 6 different schools were taken to a hospital for a visit. There, they were made to understand the whole working structure of a hospital. They saw all the important units including the operation theatre, ICU, orthopaedic ward and the dialysis centre. They also had a brief yet an interesting discussion with the doctors, sisters and the ward boys. It was an exciting opportunity for all the students as it helped them gain a realistic vision of the profession. They were amazed to see the equipments and machines that are used during surgeries and diagnosis processes. The field trip culminated with refreshments and an interactive debriefing session. Children shared their views and experience delightfully. Even though the field visit was not easy to arrange, all the challenges seemed worthwhile after seeing the satisfaction on the faces of the students.

As Deepak continues to arrange field trips for more students, he believes that such programmes and activities not only generate interest in young students; it also encourages and motivates them to experiment with new things. His project turned out to be a successful one. It was an enlightening experience for students. The school teachers were

also happy to see the exposure their students had gained and decided that such field visits should be made a part of the school curriculum. The field visits have given the students of Gharchidoli a platform to improve their communication skills and explore their talents, capabilities and interests. Interactions with senior professionals have helped them gain confidence to set new mile stones to achieve in life. It has given them the motivation and courage to see beyond the possible and dream for a bigger and better life.