

# Happiness found in rags.

"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

Is said by John F. Kennedy. It also applies to the way we think here at St. Mary's. That is why Hunger Projects are organised, as a way to learn of the problems of the poor and also to alleviate some of their problems. We took the Lodhi Colony as our target location. It had a number of people doing odd jobs in need of our help. We decided to make Rajma Chawal, a delicious meal that is also healthy and full of protein and carbohydrates.

After collecting the materials and cooking the food, we set out in a bus to the location. When we reached, we were greeted by the terrible sight of mud and sewage crusted curb and malnourished and children running around in rags. But what was amazing was that despite the situation around them, the children played happily, uncaring for the dirt and mud, engrossed in their play. When we asked them to queue up for the distribution, these children were among the first. It was a scene that brought a smile in all of us, one that was very sad, considering the situation.

After the primary distribution of the food was over and everyone had a plate in hand, we took the opportunity to talk with the residents of this slum. The slum was a collection of tents and temporary housings for about 50 families to live. The primary job was weaving string and bamboo baskets to sell.

We talked to various people and asked them about whether the children went to school. It seemed unlikely as many children of schooling age were present. What was even more saddening was that these children used crude language and swear words and some were even taking Ghutka and Paan Masala. These are 10-year olds we're talking about.

The first person to talk to us was a man who was cradling a baby girl in his arms. He talked about how all his 4 children went to school and the miserable mindset of the people living there. He told us how many parents didn't allow their children to attend school, preferring to keep them home to as their help.

We then talked to some children. We learned how many had previously gone to school but because of it being torn down to make something else, had now dropped out. They lamented the fact that they had to travel so long to reach the nearest school. Parental Pressure again came into play. We talked to a 12-year old boy who told us about his love for studying but was forced to drop out due to his parents not allowing further studies. We tried to convince many people to send their children to school and improve their lot in life. Also, we tried to persuade the children themselves to make a little effort and stand up to their parents to send them to school.

We feel a lot of them took our words to heart and "Pinkie-Promised" 😊 to get themselves enrolled in school in the coming months. We also distributed food to everyone and had a few plates of it ourselves also.

The experience has given us a whole new perspective about the homeless and the poor around us and has enabled us to see the completely different world that is in which they live. It enabled us to

see the zeal of the people to survive even in hopeless conditions and the frank amusement of the children who derive fun out of even the most miserable living conditions.

We deem Hunger-Project November 2018 a huge success 😊 😊.

