

## Fifteen years of Work and Fun

2012 is a very special year for us at Karm marg because this year in February we completed 15 years.

Looking back, it has been a rewarding journey. From a modest beginning, in two small rooms near the New Delhi railway station, we are now situated on a one and half acre campus outside Faridabad. Our home is well known for its unique, caring and nurturing environment for boys, girls as well as children with handicaps and special needs. Along with the name Karm Marg our design and manufacturing unit called Jugaad is also a well known brand name. Jugaad products are easily recognisable for their use of waste materials, playfull designs and sense of fun. Over 250 women and young adults work help us manufacture and benefit through Jugaad. We have a number of friends and their continued trust and support is integral to our success. A special thanks to our long term supporters SCOMI, Mukti Foundation, GFC, Rug Company and Haldirams. Special thanks to People Tree and Bindass for their help in developing Jugaad's business model; to Dastkar, for provding us a platform and our regular buyers Either Or, Shared Earth, Papertrie and Fairkauf. Our greatest achievement however must be all the young men and women who have grown up in our home and are now settled in life as confident, self-sufficient individuals. Their continuous bond with Karm Marg is a strong and mutually beneficial one.

As with every family, Karm Marg too faces numerous challenges. Our beautiful but remote location makes it difficult for us to find and keep qualified staff and volunteers. Motivating the teenagers and shielding then from outside pressures remains an ongoing challenge. Inflation is giving us a hard time and we are yet to become fully self-sufficient. Our newest challenge came in the form of a "wake-up" call from the CWC. To meet their conditions we now have to separate the living arrangments of the boys from the girls. This means building new infrastructure and raising funds for construction.

Going ahead, we look to meet these challenges with your continued support.

To know more about our journey and where we've reached, do visit us at [www.karmmarg.org](http://www.karmmarg.org) and [www.jugaad.org](http://www.jugaad.org).

## **Programs and Achievements**

The last year has seen us give extra attention to the seniour school kids going to the government school. Like with many teenagers, there is often a gap between

career expectations and reality. Navneet a long time well wisher and friend of Karm Marg has now joined our team as a consultant counsellor. Besides being in regular contact with the children and school teachers, she is also in contact with all the staff members who are involved in the education of the children at the Care Home. This ensures that appropriate and individual child-centred guidance is given to the children. Navneet will also be helping Karm Marg and the older children look at career options for each child depending on their aptitude and interest. She will help them identify and plan specific vocational and life skill training programmes for them. All the older children are now getting career counselling.

Another new infusion of ideas came through Veena after she attended the Learning Society conference in Himachal in the month of April. She met a number of groups and individuals doing interesting work in areas like organic farming, alternative education, product design sales development. We have discussed these ideas and are now adapting them to suit our needs.

We had a great 10 day summer holiday thanks to Mukit Foundation in the month of June in Manali. The children went on a number of small treks, learnt yoga and camped out. Some of them also experienced snow for the first time on the Rohtang pass. This was also a good time to introspect, discover new things about themselves and spend quality time with Veena and Navneet. The highlight however, was the praise from the campsite managers who claimed to not have met a more lively, vibrant and creative bunch of kids before!

In May and then again in October we invited Manoj from one of our partner organisations (Shikshantar, Udaipur, Rajasthan) conducted a “healthy cooking” workshop. We all learnt how simple changes in diet would help us stay healthy. Though the children enjoyed the workshop, they were initially a bit resistant to the changes. After a lot of discussion we now have a weekly menu that follows the new recipes and ensures that we all have healthier food.

Sumi a freelance Counsellor whom Veena met in Himachal worked with the children for 10 days in May and 25 days in September and October. Her skillful way of interacting with the children and addressing their emotional needs made her the most popular counsellor we’ve ever had. Very gently, she helped the children discover and explore their strengths and weaknesses as well as showed them ways to enhance their strengths and transform their

weaknesses. She has had a very positive impact on almost all the children and we look forward to welcoming her again later this year.

The primary school going children (5-10 Year olds) attended a week long art workshop conducted by Art 1<sup>st</sup> at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in Delhi . They had a great time exploring different art techniques, paper collage, mosaic, paints, drawing, and story drawing. They also learnt about Henry Matisse.

They would visit the museum veryday after the workshop and shared their thoughts and questions about the exhibits with the resident curator. She told us later that she was amazed at their out-of- the box perspectives and interpretations of simple and complex themes.

NAZ foundation sent a training team to conduct a ‘Sexual Health and Aids Awareness” workshop with all our staff and children. In the children’s workshop, boys and girls were separated, so that they could discuss sexual health and other related issues freely. The staff too found it very useful and a follow up session is being planned to focus specifically on nutrition, medication and emotional handling of children with HIV.

In the summer we also had Ankur, a theatre and creative writing facilitator from Kolkata spend a month with the children doing a theatre workshop. Ankur managed to inspire the children to come up with their own small sketches and stories. He then helped them bring all this together into a 40 minute production. The most exciting part of the workshop was that Ankur involved the children with special needs as well and together they put up an excellent performance for about 40 friends of Karm Marg.

Our gardeners and the older children have put in a lot of effort to make our kitchen garden bloom. Using organic farming techniques, we have grown potatoes, tomatoes, gourds, pumpkins, okra, and many kinds of leafy greens. We are constantly looking for new recipes to make use of the bumper crop.

Ashu, one of the children at Karm Marg, participated in an orientation programme to get admission into Swaraj University to learn film making. We are happy to report that he has been selected and has already started his year-long journey with them.

Pooja joined us as staff in January and helps us with the education and administration.

This year 6 children took the 12<sup>th</sup> class (final school year) and 3 children took 10<sup>th</sup> class exams. Every one of them scored over 70% marks. 3 children sat for the exam from the open school.

Mukesh is now in his second year of working at Haathi Chaap. The handmade and Elephant dung paper making unit based in Delhi.

We have a new Solar water heating unit thanks to the Charlsbury Beer Festival, UK.

We also completed our Bhatola project with the help of the Soroptimist Club, Netherlands.

We raised the salaries of all the staff in Febuary. This was necessary due to inflation and for us to stay competitive with market rates. It has been a huge challenge for us to raise funds for the staff salaries.

The new challenges this year also inspired a greater involment from our board. We had a larger number of meetings and exchanged new ideas on the way ahead.

We can report success in fundraising from a new group of supporters, through the web platform called Global Giving, where we now have a permanent spot.

Last year also saw the complet separation of Jugaad form Karm Marg. It is now functioning as a fully commercial unit and paying commercial taxes.

Guneet a young and dynamic designer joined us in the month of April and is now incharge of production at Jugaad.

We are participating in more exhibitions all over India. We are now partnering with more web retail portals and our online sales are picking up slowly, but steadily.

We are now training more women from villages beyond our own to help us with our production.

Our exports are also doing well and we will be increasing the number of paper bags.

