

Profile of an Apna Skool Student



Eleven year old Kajimudeen studies in grade 4 at an Apna Skool education centre in Kanpur. His family migrated from Barbata in Assam and his parents Sidique Ali and Marjeena are both rag pickers. The children are engaged in rag collecting and sifting for recyclable things from 5 AM to 1 PM, so the Apna Skool near this locality begins only at 2 PM. Kajimuddeen is a serious student and works hard with his lessons.

Kajimuddeen's family and their community of rag pickers live in a small cluster of makeshift dwellings constructed out of polythene sheets and other waste material. They set up their '*baastis*' wherever they find a vacant piece of public land. Earlier the Apna Skool centre was located close to their *baasti*, but when the illegally constructed *baasti* was demolished, the entire community had to move to a new location several miles away. The children now have to travel about 4.5 miles to get to school and back.

Kajimuddeen not only wants to maintain his link to the Apna Skool, he wants the other displaced children to go to school too. He has, therefore, voluntarily taken on the task of bringing four younger children to school in a make-shift cart tied to his bicycle. The long journey, which is undertaken after a full day of working as a rag-picker tires him out, but his desire for an education and for ensuring the education of other children is so great that he undertakes it quite cheerfully.