

Former President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Visits USAID Supported Education Program in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD (Andra Pradesh, India), August 2, 2008: His Excellency Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India visited the non-governmental organization Community and Progress (CAP) Foundation's Learning Institute located at Pattancheru, Hyderabad. During his visit, Dr. Kalam had an hour-long interactive session with approximately 300 children and young people of *Madrasa* Education Program and Workforce Development Initiative (*Ek Mouka*) – programs receiving assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to facilitate skill training for poor and marginalized youth and improving the quality of education in *madrastas*.

Consul General of USA (Hyderabad) Cornelis M Keur and his wife Sommay also accompanied the President at the event. For Keur, this was his first public appearance at Hyderabad. The new Hyderabad Consulate will start functioning in December 2008.



Former President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, Consul General of USA (Hyderabad) Cornelis M Keur and Piyush Kumar, Collector, Hyderabad during the interactive session at CAP Foundations' Learning Institute. Photo/USAID

Dr. Kalam commended CAP Foundation for addressing poverty alleviation through second chance education to hard-to-reach children including Muslim minorities and supporting interventions that specifically link education to employment. “This will enable building of safer, healthier and productive communities of young people capable of supporting self-directed growth”, he said. Dr. Kalam, also known for his love for children shared that he believes in the power of Youth. He asked the children to dream. “For dream would translate into thoughts and thoughts will become actions”, he said.

Addressing the children, Consul General Keur said: “The US Government is privileged to be a part of this very exciting initiative which is linking learning and livelihood”. Referring to his own



Cornelis M Keur and his wife Sommay writing a message in the diary of a young woman during the event. Photo/USAID

childhood experiences and his humble upbringing, he urged the children to inculcate in them the habit of reading and to pick up skills that we do with our hands, which he found very useful in his life.

USAID supported Workforce Development Initiative mobilizes poor and marginally educated youth and provides them training in skills demanded by industry (computers, spoken English, communication skills, customer relations, teamwork etc). Designed in close collaboration with the private sector, the program fulfills their need for trained manpower. Under the Madrasa Quality Education Program, USAID has been working with Muslim community leaders and *madrasa* administrators to introduce formal curricula in the *madrastas*, enroll and retain out-of-school children, improve the quality of education, enhance the range of educational services, and prepare *madrastas* to meet government standards.