

# Kids extend support to elders reeling under debt

Neel Kamal | TNN

**Ballran (Sangrur):** "Every man gets to chose his destiny, no matter what his father did." But for the kids devastated by the ghost of burgeoning debt that has left them fatherless, it is this very destiny that they are fighting hard to change.

After the government bailed out of providing any support, the 12 youngsters were extended assistance by a US-based couple - Manmit Singh and Harpreet Kaur. Last week, the children along, with the couple, had met agriculture minister Sharad Pawar, who promised all help. However, till that takes concrete shape, the youngsters have decided to prevent others from taking the extreme step.

Working in this direction, a support and celebration event was organised in this tiny village dusty village that has reportedly witnessed the maximum number of farmer suicides (81 farmers of the village have committed suicide since 1990).

At the support event, the brave kids mingled with the village folk who are reeling under heavy debt trap and poured their hearts out. The aim was to ensure the elders that they were not in this battle alone - that the struggle to fight extreme poverty was theirs' too.

Jasbir Kaur, shouldering the responsibility of two younger brothers after losing her father to debt, after which her mother left the kids in misery, said, "We have sent a



CAMPAINING AGAINST FARMERS' SUICIDES

message to the Union government. Now, we want our own people to practice restraint and not take the extreme step." When Jasbir and others like her narrated their stories, the village elders, including sarpanches of nearby villages, became emotional and resolved to live,

## Filming tragedy

A programme officer with IBM at Texas, Manmit and his wife Harpreet Kaur are here to shoot a film on farmers' suicides. In an effort to showcase the misery of the poor, especially the children affected by the scenario, the film will focus on deprivation of educational and healthcare facilities to such kids. Slated for an August worldwide release, the movie will be screened all over America. "The yet-to-be-named production will focus on the plight of the farmers, with the government shrugging off its responsibility," Harpreet told TOI. The couple also donated Rs 1 lakh to the Baba Nanak Educational Society and extended help to Jasbir Kaur, who is living under utter poverty.

for the sake of these kids.

In fact, on Saturday, the village government high school witnessed many such transformations. With the persistent efforts of the NRI couple, the villagers resolved to stand by each other, even if the government did not take the responsibility

of its people.

Naresh Khan (16), another youngster who lost his father to the ominous debt trap, said, "We had given up hope and did not want to live. However, with the efforts of the NRI couple, we want to work towards building a new life."