

# Night schools come to the fore

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Gauri Rane

There are over 150 night schools in Mumbai, over 200 in the Maharashtra catering to more than 20,000 students between the age group of 15 to 25 years. Coming from socio economically marginalised families, these children have no choice but to work as child labourers during the day and fulfil their aspirations of studying at night.

"Children studying at night schools are exposed to a tough life outside the security of a classroom. Those who are here need to get adequate education and guidance so that they can grow in life," said Nikita Ketkar. Ketkar is founder of a non-profit organisation Masoom which has adopted the cause of addressing the problems faced by these students.

Ketkar and her team (a group of students from night colleges across the city) conducted research to learn and understand the issues that night schools face so that they could be dealt with in a planned manner.

"The basic problem in night schools is that of very low pass percentage and a high number of absentees," said Ketkar. According to her there are several reasons for this. "Most students at night schools are class four labourers or help parents in their small-time businesses. This keeps them busy through the hours in which a night school functions," she said.

Secondly, the near absence of science labs, limited or no access to computers, only means that they have no exposure to these important amenities until a few hours before the class X exams.

Ketkar also points out that many of them being secondary schools are not totally covered by the Sarva Shiksha



ANAND SHINDE/DNA

Abhiyan. "As most students come from work or some other course these schools need to provide some evening snack," said Ketkar adding that night schools do not come under the mid-day meal policy.

To tackle some of these issues, Ketkar and her team have evolved a three pronged strategy. "We want to improve education infrastructure, enhance teacher quality through training programmes and moreover, work at city and state level to bring about policy level change," said Ketkar.

By doing this, she hopes to equip night schools

teachers and students as well with a concise syllabus which can be completed in less number of hours as compared to regular day schools.

To fund this, Ketkar's Masoom has

## Highlights

- Vocational guidance
- Quality teacher training programmes
- Field trips
- Sunday classes for extra curricular activities
- Evening meals and snacks

associated with an international organisation Global Fund For Children (GFC). "Our organisation is keen support Masoom, to provide a holistic development to students in the night school by incorporating various initiatives," said GFC's South Asia programme officer, Vineeta Gupta.

GFC will provide grants in cash as well as incorporate sports, English language skills, vocational guidance and counselling in the otherwise mundane curriculum which has proved to be highly demotivating to students.

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