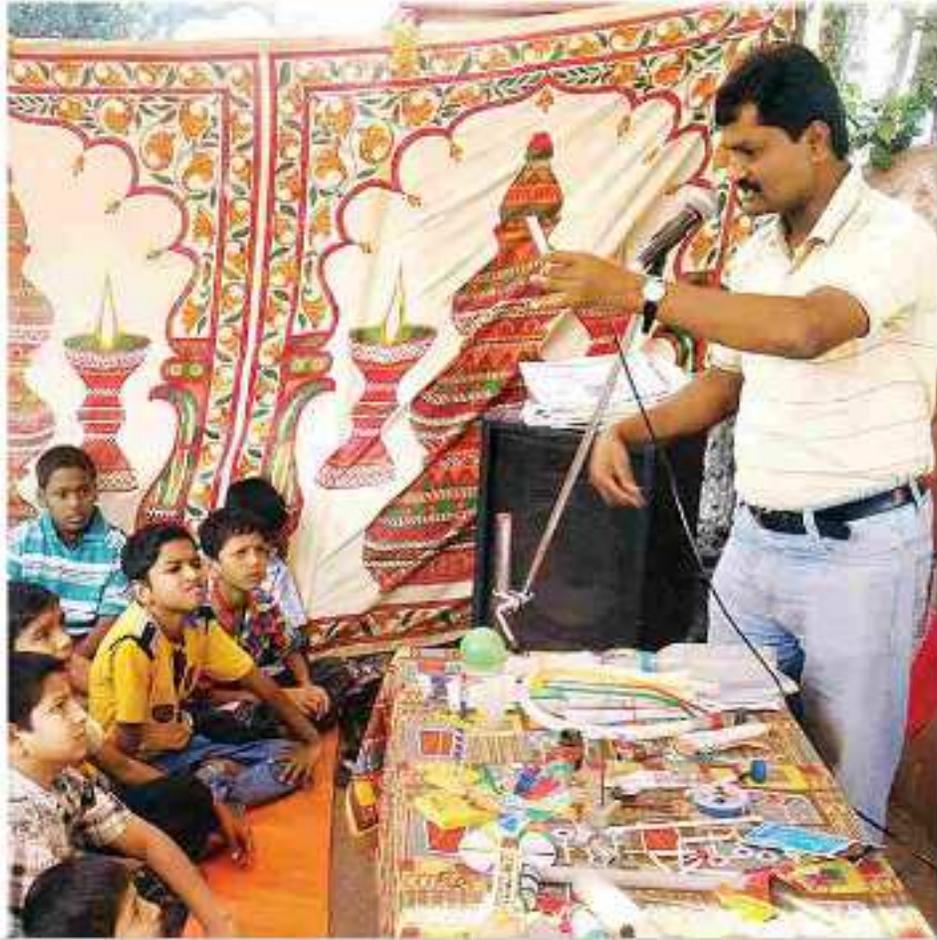


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Extending a helping hand to less fortunate kids

Students of IISER solely manage 'Disha', which teaches underprivileged children

Gaurav Ogle



Volunteers of 'Disha', an organisation managed entirely by students of city-based Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), have stepped forward to bring a change in the lives of underprivileged children. They travel to different parts of the city after their classes and spend time with the underprivileged children, teaching them basic English, mathematics and science. A student initiative, the primary motive of 'Disha' is to give something back to society.

One of the core members of 'Disha', Kaustubh Deshpande, overwhelmingly said, "The organisation has been the trigger for us to bring the change we want to see. After the initial programme was successful in Someshwarwadi, we decided to expand and opened centres in Janwadi and Laman Basti in Pune."

Pranith Simha, an active volunteer said, "One of the major challenges we face is to get children

interested in studies. We try to help them connect education with their everyday life, which will eventually enrich their lives. We also encourage them to ask a lot of questions. Some of our volunteers teach them painting, which the kids really enjoy learning.”

He further added that ‘Disha’ needs more such volunteers in order to reach out to more children. Involved with recent activities of ‘Disha’, student volunteer, Vasu Mitra, informing about the newly started outreach programme ‘Spread the smile’, said, “As part of the programme, we recently went to four nearby villages during weekends and did some interesting activities like made toys and conducted science projects. In fact, there are many people in Pune who want to do contribute meaningfully to society but hesitate in making a regular commitment. So, we appeal to them to join our outreach programme and give the children just one weekend in a month.”

Mitra informed that there are many who do not want to teach but still want to join them. “For them, we are planning to set up a resource team, which will be coordinating with other NGOs to find out about better teaching methods and equipment. We regularly go on weekdays to teach the children, whereas ‘Spread the smile’ programme is conducted on weekends.”

Appealing to the new volunteers, Krishna Anujan, a member of ‘Disha’ said, “We get an overwhelming response from the underprivileged children and it is very touching when they ask ‘when will you come next?’ We will be more than willing to help the new members with whatever resources or ideas we have gathered and also learn from them about what we are lacking.”

Students can find out more about Disha through <http://iiserpunedisha.wordpress.com/> or write to them on disha.iiserpune@gmail.com.