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Taking education to remote corner...

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## **Taking education to remote corners**

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They sure have the capability and willingness to devote time for something constructive. Yet, the ultimate impetus that drives them is the belief that education alone can elevate the downtrodden in this country.

India Sudar Educational and Charitable Trust, run by a group of like-minded IT professionals, was founded in Chennai in 2004. Today, the trust has its wings spread across the four states of South India and is looking at penetrating the North. The Karnataka leg of the trust, which was launched in June 2006, has over 20 core members and 250-plus regular members. "If not for education, we wouldn't be where we are today. So why not do something for the benefit of the underprivileged?" says Sivanarayanan Pasupathy, one of the trustees of India Sudar. "Seventy per cent of our projects are focused on rural areas. We also work for some remote city-based government schools and orphanages," he adds.

The trust's several initiatives in rural Karnataka have touched the lives of as many as 3,180 children. Some of its key areas of work involve deployment of teachers in select village schools and India Sudar learning centres. "When we visited rural schools to take stock of the situation, we found there was a constant shortage of teaching staff," explains Udhaya Kumar V, one of the founder members of India Sudar. The abysmally low student-teacher ratio in these schools prompted these young professionals to start deploying teachers, based on their local contacts. "In Karnataka, five teachers have been deployed to date. We pay them salaries and assess their performance periodically," adds Sivanarayanan.

The trust's initiatives have immensely benefited the children of this village," says R Bhuvaneshwari, a teacher at an India Sudar learning centre in Hosahalli village of Koppal district. "Currently, we have 30 students enrolled here. We take in those kids who are keen on studying but do not get adequate assistance in government-run schools. In fact, more such learning centres should be set up," she adds.

India Sudar also conducted a notebook drive across five villages each in Tumkur and Chikkaballapur districts of Karnataka in 2008. "Government schools provide free uniforms and textbooks to the children. However, they are not given notebooks and stationery. And given their financial condition, they can hardly afford any themselves. So we thought of conducting a notebook drive and the response was incredible. This year, we plan to reach 17 rural schools," Sivanarayanan explains.

The trust's other initiatives include providing individual scholarships, setting up India Sudar libraries, computer training centres and providing self-development training.

Taking up such a social cause along with regular work is no cakewalk for these professionals. To top it, managing multiple projects in remote areas further adds to their challenge. "We want more working people to join our initiative. We need more volunteers to execute projects in rural areas. And, of course, with more funding, we can reach out to more number of rural students," asserts Sivanarayanan.

Many of these professionals have themselves studied in rural schools and are, hence, aware of the difficulties involved. For others, it's an opportunity to give back to society. Whatever the reason, their gusto is palpable and their efforts commendable.

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