

Launching them into life, with care

Bangalore: Ask an 11-year-old at Parikrma, a school for street, slum and orphaned children, which standard she is in, her reply will be 'Saturn' or 'Jupiter'. The children here have no concept of pass or fail or 2nd Standard or 4th, they just move around the planetary system, says CEO Shukla Bose.

This being a school where there might be a 13 year-old who would have never been to a classroom, Bose believes putting the child in 1st standard, which has lots of 6-year olds, might be uncomfortable. The blue-green façade with graffiti and illustrations done by the children themselves is a venture in aspirations vs reality, addressing the poorest of the poor. Clad in denim uniforms, the children studying here could describe how a mother committed suicide or a father left home. Knowing these traumatic backgrounds, the school has various activities like de-addiction program with NIMHANS, a counsellor and dietician.

The ICSE, English medium of education bodes well with the children and so its common to hear the slum-dwellers or rag-pickers picking up a copy of *The National Geographic* or discussing news headlines of newspapers or debate what exactly happened at Athens. "We've to move away from servile approaches of education. That's why the students never say Miss/Ma'am, it is important to give exposure and make them feel wanted. These children are special because they're from the streets" says Bose, who had a successful corporate career spanning over 28 years. Exposure seems to be in place and it is intriguing to head them dish out *gyan* about the satellites of the planets after which their classes have been named.