

They put the play back into every school playground

Yamini Nair | TNN

Children learn best through free play and discovery. In a city struggling for lung space, playgrounds in schools offer a relief for children. However, to make them

feel happier, just a bit of space is not enough.

Sunitha Maheshwari, a paediatric cardiologist, realized this while taking a stroll near

her house at Thubrahalli in 2005. She saw children in a vast playground with nothing to play with.

She asked the principal whether she could arrange for play equipment on the ground for children. The principal agreed, and thus began the activities of People4People, which develops play areas for kids.

The trust installs equipment like slides, jungle gym, climbers, round-

PEOPLE4PEOPLE

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abouts, see-saws, mini-whirls and swings. "We mainly target government schools in poorer neighbourhoods where children don't have any play equipment," says Sunitha, a trustee of People4People and director of Teleradiology Solutions, Bangalore.

"Our first experiment was at Thubarahalli Government School where kids were on the slide even before the paint dried," she says.

Another trustee of the organization, Arjun Kalyanpur, adds: "It's a very satisfying experience. We just aim to provide some happiness to children." With the strong belief that the



HAPPY TIME: This trust installs play equipment on playgrounds, especially in government schools across the state. Children, naturally, are a happy lot!

fundamental right of every child is uninhibited playtime, People4People has so far given play equipment in 33 schools across Karnataka, including schools in Mysore and Tumkur.

"We get requests from schools. Our priority is government ones, but we will take up other requests too. One among them is Love Dale children's home in Bangalore," says Sunitha.

A visit to these playgrounds will make you believe what you've heard. Children crowd around mini-whirls for their turn while slides never take a rest. Anitha A, a Class IV student of Government Higher Primary School, Ramagondahalli, says with a broad smile: "I just love to be in this", as she works her leg and makes the mini-whirl move."

Manjunath Naik, cluster resource person of Channasandra area, says: "Attendance in these schools have gone up to 85-90% from 60% to 70% after play areas were set up," he said. Twelve schools under his cluster group have got play equipment so far.

"Our target is to cover 100 schools in the state by the end of this year," says a proud Sunitha. The organization raises funds through contacts and donations.

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Photo courtesy: People4People

