

Students offer solutions to global problems

Vinaya Deshpande

MUMBAI: A bunch of school-children have come up with solutions to some of the most haunting woes of modern landscape — malnutrition, bad roads, environmental degradation and cyclical unemployment. They have not just come up with ideas, but also demonstrated workable models for implementing them.

In a competition named Happy India held in several cities across the country, students were asked to list some of the worst problems they thought the country faced and come up with solutions.

They were given time to come up with a workable model, and have now been provided with basic funds and expert guidance from industry to implement the ideas.

Four students from Mumbai's Podar International School have come up with a self-sustained model to provide better nutrition to the slum-dwellers. "I got this idea as I used to walk past a slum while going to school. I saw that the people there were very lethargic. For them, eating was only meant to fill their stomachs. They have no concept of nutrition, because they cannot afford nutritious food. So we came up with a cross-subsidised model to

provide cheap and good quality vegetables to them," said Poonam, a student of Standard IX.

They bought vegetables from wholesale market and then sold half the stock to well-off societies at a price lower than the retail market. Since they cut down on the middle-level chain, their profits were higher. They used the profit to subsidise the sale of vegetables in slums. The slum dwellers paid half the market price for good quality vegetables..

Another team of ninth graders from Podar International, Team Next, has come up with a model to address the problem of cyclical unemployment by providing basic skills to daily wage labourers. They worked on creating a database, distributing pamphlets in slum areas, co-ordinating with industries and providing employment.

A team of Ryan International School has worked out a model to use waste plastic in building pothole-free roads. They have even been able to procure permission from the local body to construct a 30-m public road.

The competition held by IndiaFirst Life Insurance will end in the first week of February when 25 teams from across the country will finish their demonstration.