

Good Samaritans fund the education of 35 Vaidu students

By Ankita Bhatkhande, Mumbai Mirror | Apr 11, 2016, 09.48 AM IST

After a huge campaign to identify out-of-school students from the Vaidu community, youths have found some good Samaritans to sponsor the education of 35 students. On Friday, these students, of which 16 are girls, met their sponsors for the first time at a community hall in Jogeshwari. The students will start their schooling in June—most have been admitted in government and private schools.

This is a huge development, as the Vaidu community, who sell herbs and medicine, does not believe in formal education and the education of girls.

Over 1000 out-of-school Vaidu students were identified after a monthlong state-wide campaign by members of the Maharashtra Vaidu Swayamsangharsha Samajik Sanstha in February. Most of these children dropped out of school due to pressure from their families or never went to school because they could not afford it.

"The community does not understand that money spent on education is an investment and not a waste," said Durga Gudilu, a Vaidu girl who spearheaded the project despite staunch opposition from her community. After identifying the students last month, Durga and her team appealed to several people from the city—from social workers to professionals and teachers and help began pouring in. "The team prepared a detailed plan of how much money was required for admission for each student who requires funds. Then we started approaching donors who then gave us cheques in the name of the schools," Gudilu said.

"I came to know about the initiative through a common friend whose mother had adopted a student. I decided to adopt two students, one girl and one boy. I had to pay a very small amount. People my age spend that much on parties and outings," said a donor who supported two class one students.

One donor, a 65-year-old Chartered Accountant from Andheri, has not only adopted a student, but has also helped find an open space where the group is now planning to set up a preschool for Vaidu students and other disadvantaged communities. "The community is slowly becoming open minded but it will take a sustained effort for several years for us to say that we have done something," the donor said.