

PLAYGROUND THAT CHANGES

TEAM VIVA

It was that time of the year when the sun was shining bright and children were heralding the summer season. But the children at Deepalaya school (Gushbetti, Haryana) had another reason to smile. For, they now have a new type of playground.

"These children get bored very easily. So we constantly have to innovate to keep them busy," says Ritwik Patra, programme director at Deepalaya. Credit for providing these special playgrounds goes to the Swiss non-governmental organisation (NGO) Art for the World.

"This is part of a project called Playground and Toys, an initiative supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. And Art for the World invites artists from around the world to use art for humanitarian purposes," explains President, Art for the World, Adelina von Fumtenberg.

The Playground and Toys project was launched in Geneva four years ago, when the organisation invited over 40 artists, architects and designers from all over the globe "to create new designs for playgrounds and educational toys."

Models and drawings from the project were later exhibited at the United Nations Visitors Centre in New York during the World Children's Summit.

"The first playground was built for a gypsy camp near Athens," Adelina informs. Artists Fabrice Gygi, Margherita Turawicz Lufarachi, Edgar Soares and Romi and Martand



Khosla have created the designs for the playground at Gushbetti.

Apart from the playgrounds, a mammoth-size football was what children were getting excited about. You could see them running after the ball and trying to kick it. Excitement and happiness were evident on each face.

Said Ankit Sharma. "We are living away from our homes, most of us being rickshaws. When our school gets these things for us we feel special." To celebrate, the children possessed small skits and dance items. "We are glad to have new things for these children at our school," said TK Mathew, Chief Executive, Deepalaya.

The playground here is not just a chunk of land. One of them has flexible slabs, which can be converted into different rooms for the children to play in. As mentioned by Patra, these special children are used to a different lifestyle and such playgrounds won't bore them.

Sudha Parthasarathy, Manager-Communications, Deepalaya, says these such programmes are in the offing for the children.

