



## The schoolbus that is school

Every day, as the big yellow bus that functions as a mobile classroom rolls into a slum in Bangalore, there are two distinct reactions from children

### KARNATAKA

ONE set of ragged children rush towards the bus, screaming and shouting, dragging along plastic bags containing books. Another group of children run away from the bus, ducking and dodging into their shanty homes.

While classes begin for the eager bunch, the second set are dragged out of their homes by the bus driver, teachers

and an ayah.

Mobile classrooms have been one of the key initiatives in Karnataka under the SSA for reaching some sort of education to children from poor families. Appropriately, one of the key attractions on the bus is an afternoon meal cooked at the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple at Bangalore.

Eight government buses have been

converted into mobile classrooms to fan out in the slums in Bangalore and gather children of the primary school age who have been left behind at home by their parents. Called Sanchari Shale, the classrooms are a sort of induction programme into mainstream education, says assistant director of public instruction and head of the mobile classroom programme, Markanayya.

After children spend a year in the mobile classroom, they are admitted into a formal government school nearby. Official figures show that 5,286 children have come aboard the mobile classroom; as many as 4,800 have been inducted into formal schools.

Teachers and officials involved with the programme, however, say their success rate is only about 50 per cent since attendance is very inconsistent and families tend to migrate very frequently. The beginning, however, has been made. "One of our basic lessons is to teach the children good hygiene. We have been most successful in this," says Anil Kumar, a coordinator and assistant teacher in the programme.

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