

From Slums to Success: Sunbeam NGO Visit

ABOUT THE NGO:

Sunbeam, a Mumbai-based NGO, is dedicated to transforming the lives of underprivileged children through holistic education. The organization focuses on empowering children living in slums and chawls to break free from poverty and achieve their aspirations. By addressing both psychological and academic needs, Sunbeam fosters self-reliance within communities. Its signature initiative, which encourages peer-assisted learning, motivates senior students to mentor their peers during vacations, fostering leadership and collaborative skills. Sunbeam's mission balances immediate support with long-term sustainability, creating an enduring impact on its beneficiaries and their families.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMS:

Sunbeam ensures education remains accessible and affordable through a robust support system and transparent student enrolment processes. The NGO serves over 1,000 beneficiaries, primarily students from 9th grade to college.

Operating in areas like Worli, Bandra East, and Khar East, Sunbeam sponsors coaching classes in the slum regions providing education support to underprivileged students for higher secondary students to prepare them for SSC Board exams which they attend after their formal school timings. Many of these students have been with Sunbeam since pre-primary and now attend English-medium schools, primarily government institutions. Coming from non-literate families, they benefit immensely from daily coaching sessions that help them navigate the challenges of English-medium education. Beyond school, the NGO extends annual college grants to students pursuing higher education in colleges, ensuring continuous support for their educational journey.

The fee-sharing model ensures affordability and promotes shared responsibility, with Sunbeam covering 50% of the coaching fees and the remaining 50% contributed by the parents and up to 25% of fees for degree-level professional courses. Additional scholarships recognize students' achievements and address unique challenges faced by orphans or those with differently-abled parents.

The NGO's career counselling initiatives provide guidance on academic and career options after 10th and 12th grades, including information about entrance exams, college admissions criteria, and fee structures, ensuring students are well-equipped to navigate their educational journey. It offers personalized counselling to help students identify their aptitudes and interests, with alternative pathways suggested when initial plans are unfeasible. Information on scholarship opportunities, including eligibility criteria and application processes. Mentorship from professionals in various fields through virtual sessions, enabling students to address their queries and gain valuable insights.

THE NGO VISIT:

Our team—comprising Winnie Dholakia, Tushar Hemrajani, and Niharika Singh—visited Sunbeam and met with its managing trustee, Khursid Dabdi. Interactions with the teaching staff and students offered a deeper understanding of the NGO’s operations and its transformative impact. The classrooms at the vision classes’ centre were abuzz with vibrant discussions among 9th and 10th-grade students, reflecting their enthusiasm and determination. A special curriculum was being taught to the students addressing both academic and personal development needs at the school level, with sessions including:

- Value Education
- Grammar
- Conversational English
- Career Counselling

A notable observation was the presence of multiple siblings from the same family, highlighting the organization’s extensive influence. The dedication of teachers was palpable, with some, like the husband-and-wife duo teaching math and languages, exemplifying personal commitment to student success. The student beneficiaries demonstrate a high success rate, with an overall dropout rate of just 1%. The failure rates are also minimal—1% for Grade 10 students and 5% for Grade 12 students. These impressive figures underscore Sunbeam's effectiveness in guiding students through their academic journey.



Pic: HYNGO Team with Khursid Dabdi Ma'am



Pic: Sunbeam Teacher with Students

BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK:

We had insightful conversations with students, who shared their aspirations to become professionals like engineers, pilots, actors, cricketers and footballers. The children also spoke about their role models, which ranged from family members to renowned figures like Ratan Tata and Rohit Sharma. Many students expressed deep respect for Khursid ma’am, inspired by her dedication to helping children.

It was heartening to learn about the students' favourite subjects —math and science—and their challenges with Marathi. The resilience and determination of these young minds were truly inspiring. Partnerships with coaching centres and Sunbeam's partial fee coverage made education accessible to families, demonstrating careful planning, and ensuring affordability without compromising quality.



Pic: Student Beneficiaries - Grade 10



Pic: Student Beneficiaries - Grade 9

CONCLUSION:

Our visit to Sunbeam was an inspiring experience. The NGO exemplifies how holistic education can empower children and communities. By addressing immediate needs and promoting long-term self-reliance, Sunbeam enables its beneficiaries to dream big and achieve their goals.

Sunbeam is more than an educational initiative—it is a transformative movement. Through academic support, skill-building, and financial aid, it nurtures confidence, resilience, and purpose in its students. The NGO's unwavering commitment to empowering children ensures that education becomes a tool for lasting change.