Mumbai Teen's Hoops4Hope Brings Over 100 Underprivileged Children Together For Basketball Tournament In Matunga

Teen-led Hoops4Hope brought more than 100 underprivileged children together for a basketball tournament in Matunga after months of free coaching. Founded by Viraj Lohchab, the Mumbai initiative promotes inclusion, fitness and equal access to sport.

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Young athletes celebrate at Matunga tournament organised by teen-led Hoops4Hope initiative | File Photo

Mumbai, April 27: In a powerful display of grassroots impact, Hoops4Hope, a community basketball initiative led by 17-year-old basketball enthusiast Viraj Lohchab, hosted an invitational full-day tournament at Matunga in Mumbai on April 26, marking the culmination of months of coaching and engagement with underprivileged children at government-run schools in the city.

A memorable day for these students, more than 20 matches were played through the afternoon, with all participants receiving an appreciation certificate apart from trophies, medals, and gifts for the winners and runners-up.

Over 100 students participate

The tournament brought together over 100 government-run middle school students, both boys and girls, who have been part of the Hoops4Hope training programme, showcasing not just their developing basketball skills, but also confidence, teamwork, and a strong sense of belonging nurtured through the sport.

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The event was attended by the Secretary of Maharashtra State Basketball Association, Mr. Govind Krishnan Muthukamar, signalling growing institutional recognition for grassroots-led sporting efforts.

Donation drive supports participants

In the lead-up to the tournament, Hoops4Hope also organised a sports equipment donation drive, mobilising support to ensure that participating children had access to essential gear, further reinforcing the initiative's community-first approach.

Young founder's vision

At the heart of Hoops4Hope is Viraj Lohchab, a student who chose to act on a simple yet urgent belief: access to sport should not depend on privilege.

A dedicated basketball player since Grade 8, Viraj has represented his school in several Mumbai inter-school and All-India International Schools competitions over the past four years.

His exposure to structured sport, combined with a six-month weekend internship with sports-tech platform Spolto in 2025, shaped his understanding of how sport can build discipline, confidence, and community.

What he also saw clearly was the gap: thousands of children eager to play, but lacking access to safe spaces, coaching, and quality equipment. Instead of waiting for change, Viraj decided to create it.

In 2024, Viraj launched Hoops4Hope with a focus on accessibility, inclusion, and consistency. He roped in his earlier coach, Prabhu Maspog of Bayciti Sports, to help him out in this noble cause.

Starting out with five government schools in Mumbai, he began conducting free weekend coaching sessions for children who had never experienced structured basketball training.

Programme expands rapidly

Within just six weeks, the initiative onboarded around 60 students. Over time, through sustained effort across more than 20 weekends, the programme expanded to engage over 100 children from underserved communities.

What sets the initiative apart is its inclusive design, ensuring equal opportunity for both girls and boys to participate, learn, and grow through sport.

Support from ecosystem partners

As the initiative gained momentum, it drew support from key ecosystem players. Spolto came in as an enabler, helping expand outreach and strengthen programme structure, adding 40+ additional participants to the initiative.

Nivia, one of India's most established sports equipment brands, supported the effort by enabling access to quality basketball gear. Its contribution ensured that children experienced

the game with the seriousness and dignity it deserves, which is an often overlooked but critical aspect in grassroots sport.

Founder and participant reactions

Says Viraj Lohchab: "Basketball has given me so much growing up, and I felt it shouldn't be limited to those who have access. Through Hoops4Hope, I just wanted to create a space where any child, regardless of background, can step onto the court, learn, and feel like they belong. The problem is not that children don't want to play – it's that many simply don't get the opportunity. If we can create even a few more spaces where they can show up and play freely, that's a meaningful start."

Added a student who played at the tournament: "Before this, I had never played basketball properly. Now I look forward to every weekend. Being on the court makes me feel confident. I never thought I would play in a real tournament. Today felt like a dream."

Need for grassroots sports access

Hoops4Hope comes at a time when India faces a widening gap in access to sport. The 2022 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents highlights that only about half of Indian children meet recommended physical activity levels, while infrastructure and access to facilities remain inconsistent.

At the same time, UNICEF India has raised concerns about rising childhood overweight and obesity levels, projecting that over 27 million children aged 5–19 could be affected by 2030.

Against this backdrop, initiatives like Hoops4Hope underscore the importance of local, consistent, and community-driven interventions.

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About Hoops4Hope

Hoops4Hope is a grassroots basketball initiative founded by Viraj Lohchab to provide structured coaching, access to equipment, and inclusive sporting opportunities for underprivileged children in Mumbai. Supported by Bayciti Academy, Spolto, and Nivia, the initiative focuses on participation, inclusion, and long-term engagement with sport.

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