

# *The Promise Foundation Projects*

## *Year 2003- 04*

### *1. Introduction*

The Promise Foundation's main vision is to use the behavioural sciences, to contribute to the prevention of poverty. In order to ensure that our interventions are objective and sound, we take the approach of developing applications on the basis of comprehensive research. To this end, we examine existing international research and conduct our own research on the basis of which we develop interventions and applications. Over the years our projects have taken a 3 pronged focus. At the first level we have developed applications that address the psychological needs of young children who are in their pre-school years and we have called this intervention the Stimulation Intervention Programme (SIP). At the second level we have standardised a systematic programme for primary and middle school children who are at risk to failing and dropping out of school. This is our Programme for Assisted Learning (PAL). Finally, our Work Awareness and You (WAY) programme is a career counselling intervention for high school children, which is designed to help them plan for effective employment in the world of work. These programmes have been implemented with increasing effectiveness over the last 12 years.

Over the year 2003, our programmes have continued with a high degree of effectiveness and we were able to reach a large number of children and their caretakers. In addition to ensuring that the SIP, PAL and WAY programmes were executed efficiently, we had three main objectives for the year:

1. We attempted to expand one section of PAL, namely the Reading Skills intervention in a more systematic manner to a larger number of schools.
2. We attempted to make some changes in the WAY programme to enhance its effectiveness.
3. Most importantly, we focused on consolidating the various programmes of The Promise Foundation.

## ***2. The Rationale behind our Programmes***

The Promise Foundation's programmes are all based on the important observation that economic disadvantage has a *cumulative* impact on the individual's growth and development. The lack of opportunities for cognitive stimulation during the crucial period of early childhood, places the young individual at a learning skills at the very outset. The effects of this disadvantage are seen when the child has to actually perform on school tests and examinations at the primary and middle school level. Close to 40% of children perform so poorly in school that they fail and drop out of school. Once children drop out of school at this stage, getting them back is extremely difficult and they drift away into child labour. Those who do manage to complete 10 years of education and reach high school are under so much pressure to begin earning to supplement the family income that they start working as unskilled labourers.



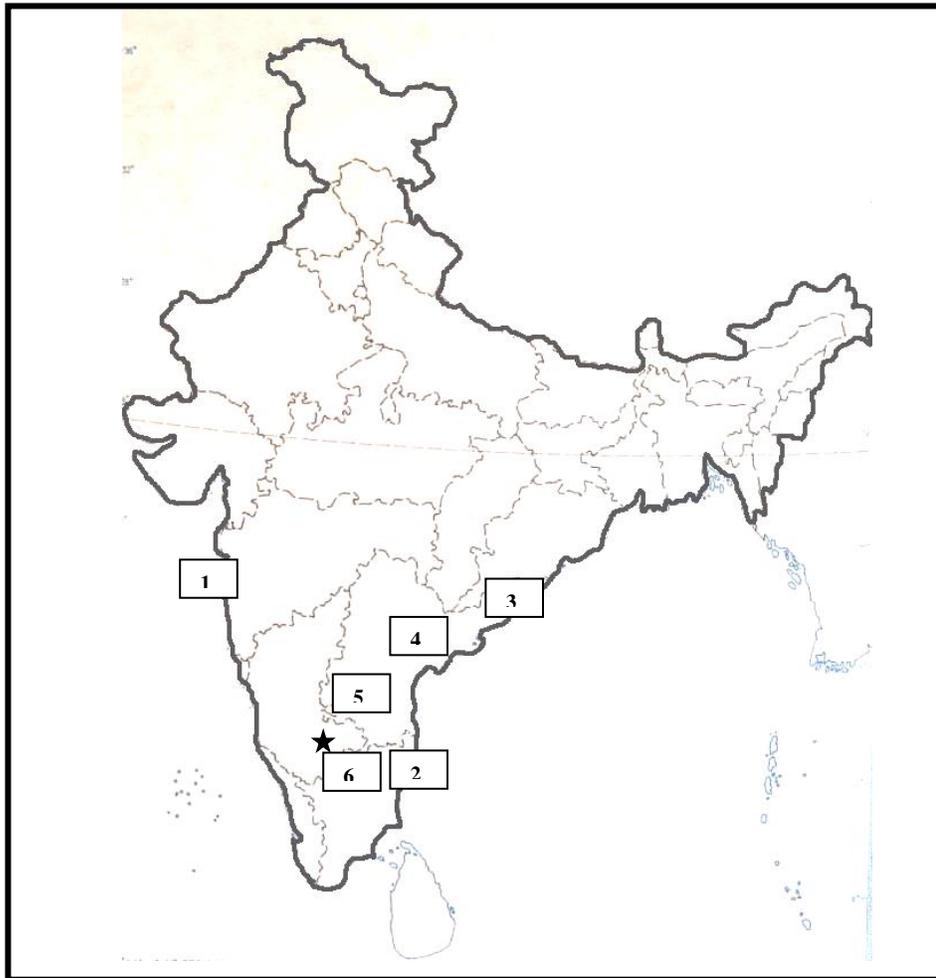
**This often is the fate of children who fail and drop out of school. This is what The Promise Foundation tries to prevent.**

This 'unskilled' status places the young person on an employment trajectory of low-paid jobs and uncertain employment. The child born into a home that is socially and economically disadvantaged, *accumulates* barriers to his or her development as she grows older. Ultimately this results in the individual *remaining* trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. The Promise Foundation's SIP, PAL and WAY therefore target three important stages in the individual's development in an attempt to create strong foundations and give the individual the tools necessary to influence the manner in which his or her life develops.

### ***3. Location of The Promise Foundation's Projects***

#### ***3.1. Projects in other cities***

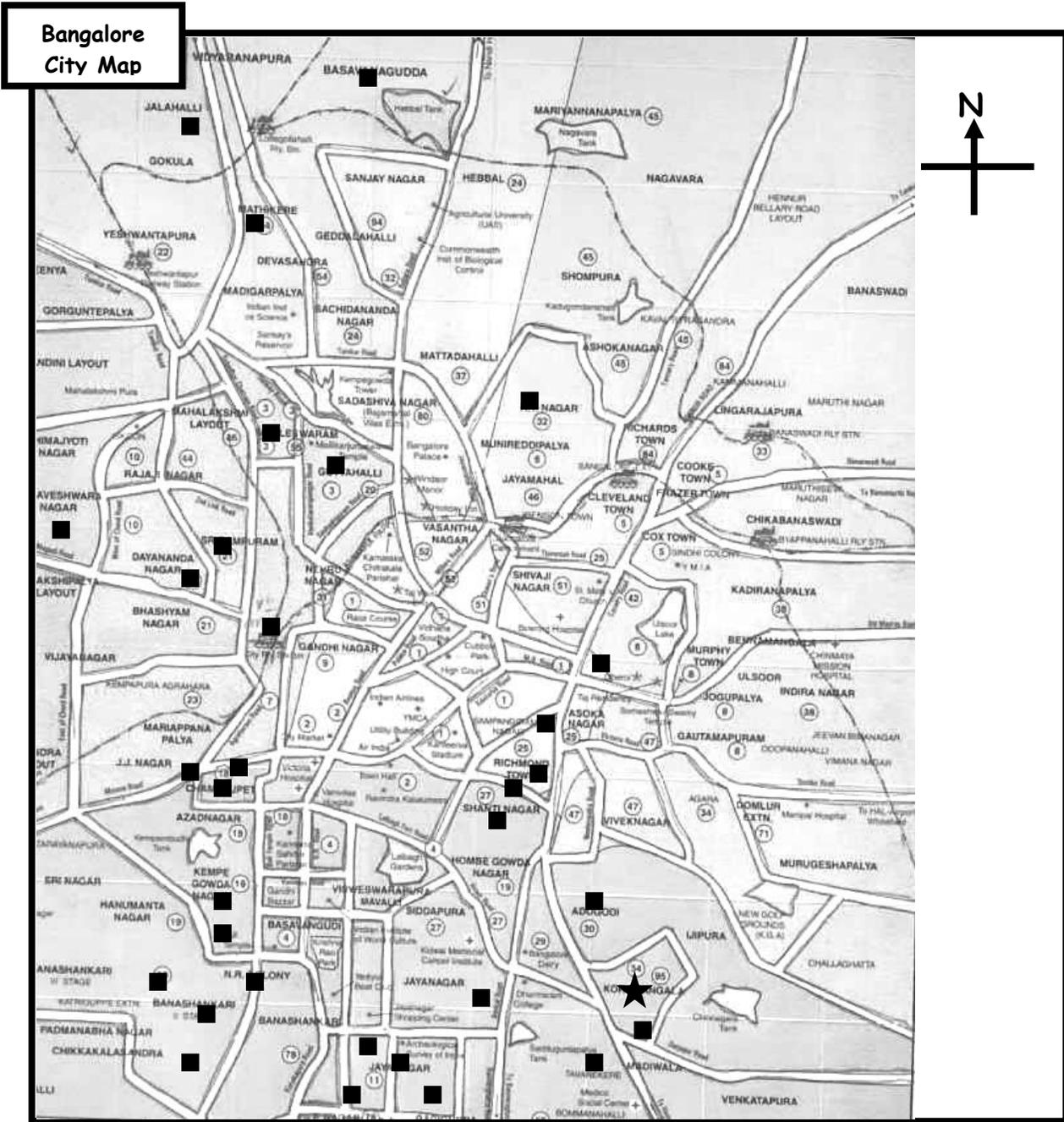
The Promise Foundation's programmes this year were executed in two new cities namely, Chennai (Madras) and Mumbai (Bombay). Last year, we had conducted training programmes in Andhra Pradesh as well. The map below provides an idea of the location of The Promise Foundation's programmes around India.



★ = TPF Headquarters in Bangalore

1 = Mumbai; 2 = Chennai; 3 = Vishakapatnam; 4 = Markapur; 5 = Hindupur; 6 = Kuppam

### 3.2. Project locations in Bangalore City



★ = TPF Office

■ = TPF Project locations in Bangalore City

#### ***4. The Stimulation Intervention Programme (SIP)***

The SIP intervention is implemented at two levels.

##### ***4.1. The Promise Shishukendra***

At the first level, we directly reach 30 children from



the local slum through the *Promise Shishukendra*. In addition to providing high quality care to these 30 children, the *Shishukendra* also functions as a model pre-school.

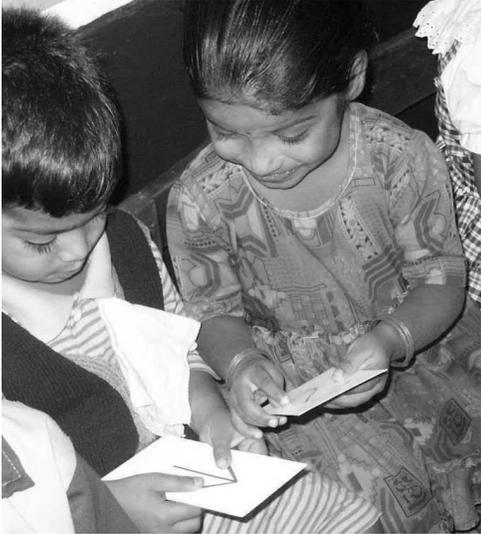
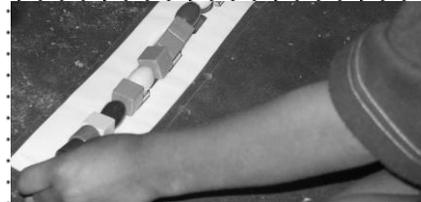
##### ***4.2. SIP Training Programmes***

At the second level, we disseminate the SIP methodology through our training programmes for other child care workers. This is a comprehensive programme that provides skills training for pre-school workers. Training is offered at various levels depending on the educational level of the trainee.

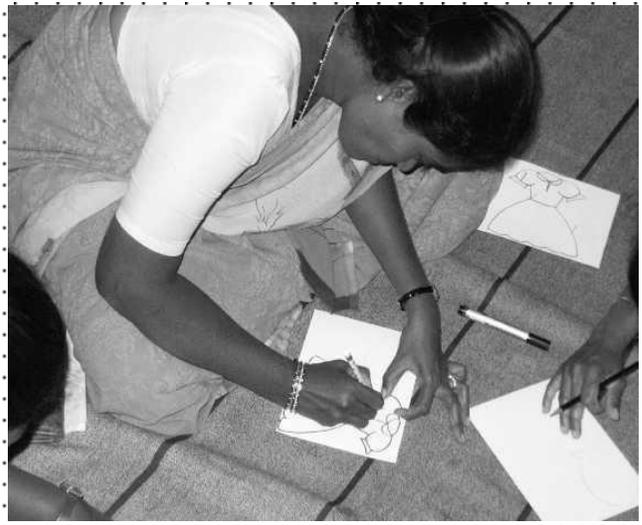
Over 2003 the SIP Training Programmes reached a total of 213 teachers sent to us for training both by Government Departments as well as other voluntary organisations committed to child care.

The following pages offer some glimpses into The Promise Shishukendra and the SIP Training Programmes.

# The Promise Shishukendra: Glimpses



## SIP- Training Programme: Glimpses



## **5. Programmes for Assisted Learning (PAL)**

### **5.1. PAL-KidSmart Early Learning Centers**

This year, The Promise Foundation collaborated with The IBM Foundation, New York, to extend the reach of the PAL intervention. PAL-KidSmart centers have been implemented in Bangalore as well as in 2 other cities, namely, Mumbai (Bombay) and Chennai (Madras).

The rationale underlying setting up PAL-KidSmart Early Learning Centres is to strengthen the linkage between the pre-school and primary school. The Learning Centers are located in Primary schools that cater to children from very low socio-economic status communities. The Learning Centers are then made accessible to children of the host primary school as well as the Anganwadis (pre-schools) in the immediate school zone (the 'feeder' pre-schools from where children are supposed to come to the primary schools).

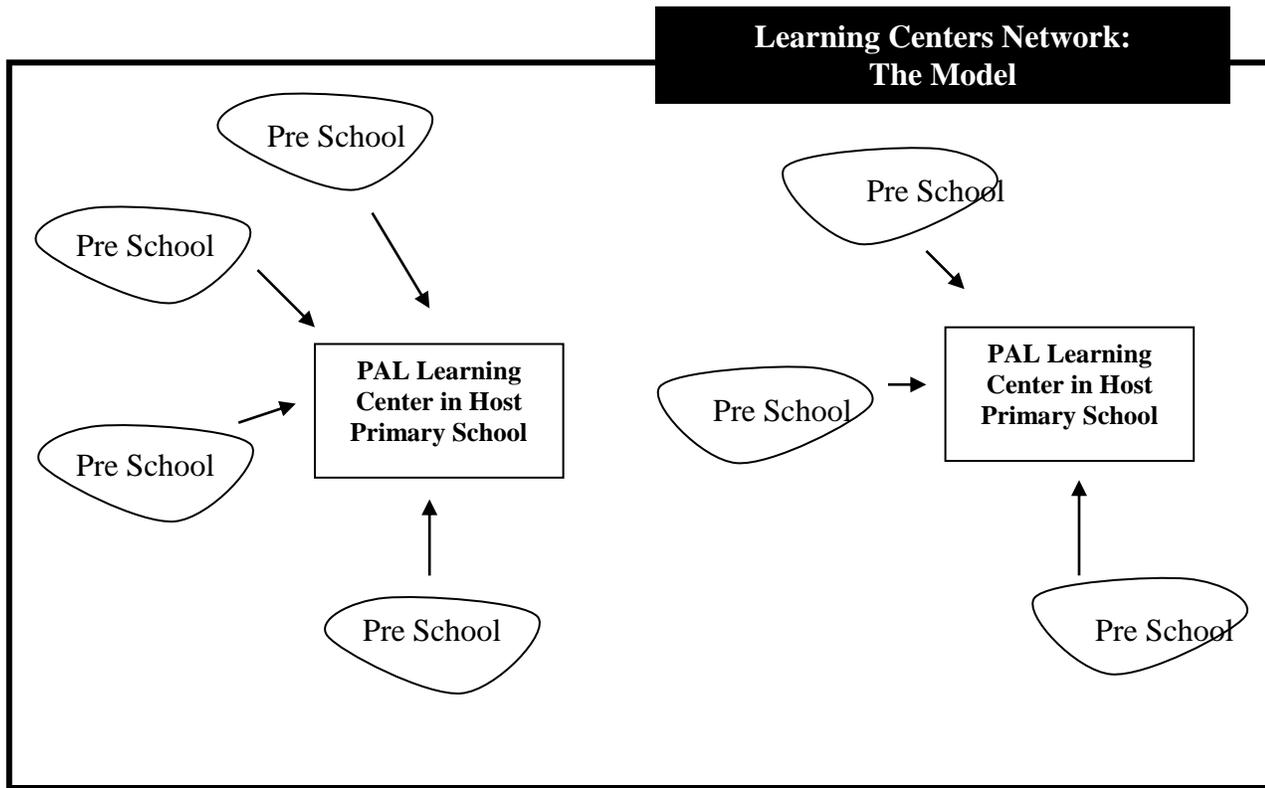
A total of 43 Learning Centers have been set up in Bangalore, Mumbai and Chennai over the year.

### **5.2. Early Learning Centers**

One of the most important factors associated with poor school attendance, drop out and difficulties with academics has been the *weak linkage* between the pre-school sector and the primary school sector. The rationale underlying setting up PAL Early Learning Centres is to strengthen the linkage between the pre-school and primary school.

The Early Learning Center is offered as a *shared service* between the Pre School and Primary School sectors. Our objective was to promote interactions between teachers and students in the two sectors. It is anticipated this increase in interaction facilitated by the Early Learning Center would allow for a smooth transition from pre-school to primary school for the young child.

We have learned through our experiences both with the pre-school and the primary school sectors in India, that *continuity* in teaching and learning experiences between pre-school and primary school is essential. When this continuity is weak or poorly defined, families do not know what the next step after pre-school is and this leads to dropping out of the educational mainstream. With this learning in mind, TPF focused on developing Early Learning Centers as *a shared resource* for a target primary school and neighbouring pre-schools. The Learning Centers are located in Primary schools that cater to children from low socio-economic status communities. The Learning Centers are then made accessible to children of the host primary school as well as the Anganwadis (pre-schools) in the immediate school zone (the ‘feeder’ pre-schools from where children are supposed to come to the primary schools).



Each Learning Center caters to approximately 300 children between the age of 3 and 8 years.

### **5.3. Learning Network**

An important objective of the project has been to link the different Early Learning Centers. This Learning Network comprised the staff who belong to the separate yet interlinked sectors of pre-school and primary school. Traditionally these sectors have remained separated administratively (usually coming under two separate departments in the Government) with limited linkages in service delivery.

### **5.4. Professional Development of the Learning Network**

Our experiences in the early childhood and primary education sector in both urban and rural India have indicated that the successful use of the Early Learning Centers will depend on a strong focus on professional development of participating teachers. All teachers who participate in the PAL Learning Network therefore go through a comprehensive 10 day training in the PAL methodology. A total of 200 teachers (both primary school and pre-school) participated in the professional development courses in 2003. The key focus points of the training were as follows:

1. skills for the promotion of reading and learning skills
2. skills for ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities
3. skills for integrating the Early learning Center into the regular school curriculum

The Promise Foundation follows a rigorous professional development programme for all participating schools and teachers. Details are as follows:

1. A ten day training programme is offered to teachers in the Learning Network. The training team will consist of faculty from The Promise Foundation who have specialised in early childhood education, special educational needs in pre and primary school and use of alternate technologies in the classroom
2. The participating teachers become a core group within their respective communities.
3. The Promise Foundation supports the core group of teachers to further disseminate information about the Early Learning Centers to other teachers in the community.

4. The target is for *all* teachers in the community to independently use the Early Learning Center.

### **5.5. *Supervision of Learning Centers***

Our experience with community based projects in the education sector has underlined the importance of supervision. It was clear that the success of the Learning Centers would depend on continued supervision and support for a minimum period of twelve months. This support is provided by six of The Promise Foundation's PAL specialists who are aware of local educational issues and fluent in the local language. The PAL teams works along with the Learning Networks to optimise the use of the Learning Centers. Our role included:

- Assistance in the identification of schools that would benefit for the Early Learning Center.
- Negotiation with local authorities, heads of institutions and others for allotment of space and other infrastructural requirements for the Early Learning Center.
- Work along with member schools and pre-schools on issues such as time-table, visits to the Learning Center and teaching programmes that can occur in the Learning Center.
- Work along with the Learning Network on exploring ways of integrating the Early Learning Center into the daily school programme.
- Detailed documentation of use of the Learning Centers and children's attainments.

### **5.6. *Outcomes***

Our observations during 2003 indicated the following:

- Observation 1: Teachers from the various Early Learning Centers have begun to interact more vigorously with each other.
- Observation 2: Ideas, teaching methods and teaching aids have begun to move across schools.
- Observation 3: Experiences with the programme are shared across schools.
- Observation 4: Teachers turn to each other to solve problems related to the teaching-learning process quite regularly.

Observation 5: Teachers from other schools where the programme is not in operation, have begun to ask for inputs. A few participating teachers have begun to spontaneously share their experiences with these teachers.

These observations point to the gradual emergence of the Learning Network and its successful operationalisation.

### ***5.7. The PAL Learning Center Programme – summary:***

- Number of teachers trained: 200
- Number of Learning Centers set up: 43
- Number of students reached (approx.): 12,900 (approx. 300 children per center)

## ***6. Work Awareness and You (WAY)***

### ***6.1. Career Counselling***

Our research has indicated that young people from disadvantaged homes are under so much pressure to begin earning as soon as possible, that large numbers of them enter the world of work as unskilled labourers. Once this happens, they miss opportunities for learning work skills and remain trapped in the cycle of poverty. One of The Promise Foundation's important objectives is to provide systematic career counselling to high school students in their final year of school, in order to help them prepare for fruitful employment. The WAY programme is conducted directly in schools and helps young people discover their talents and interests, obtain information about career opportunities and then set clear career development targets. Our approach helps the young person plan for systematic career development, keeping in mind, the various economic and social hardships that he or she faces.

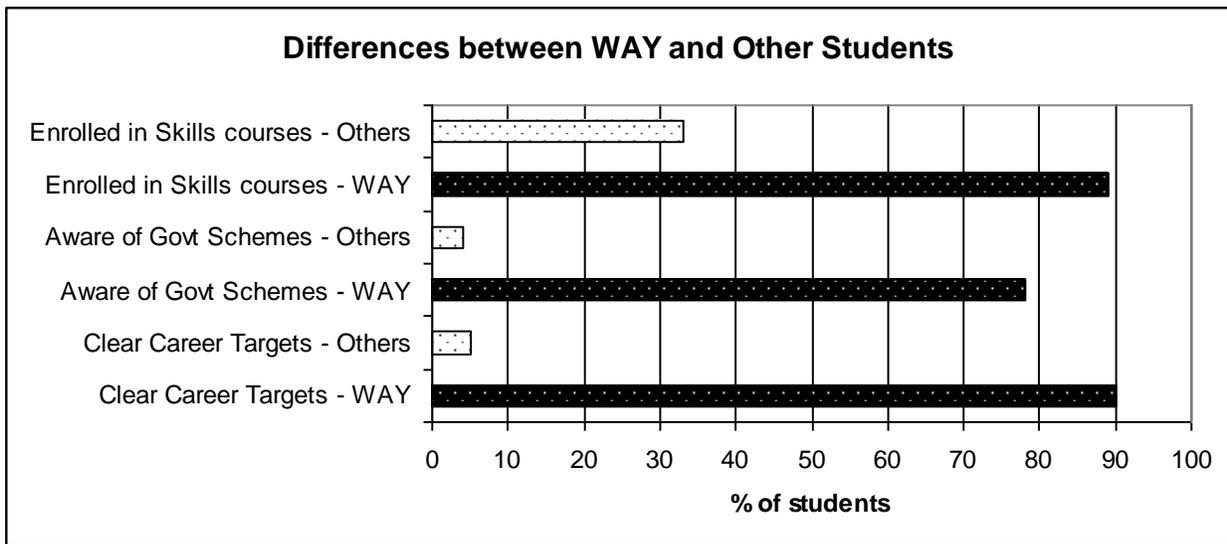
### ***6.2. Impact***

The impact of The Promise Foundation's career counselling intervention continues to be significant in the lives of these young people. This year we followed up 452 of the students who had gone through the WAY programme in 2002 to determine what they were doing after

completing high school. Their responses were compared with 113 of their friends who had never attended the WAY programme. The differences were as follows:

- All students who had attended the WAY programme had clear career targets.
- A larger number of WAY students had a clear idea of government schemes that were available to them in the form of scholarships, loans and free educational courses.
- A larger number of WAY students were enrolled in skills based training programmes or had gone on for further education.

The figure below presents the differences between WAY students and those who had not attended the WAY programme



### 6.3. Study Skills Component

As with students in Government primary and middle schools students in high school also have significant difficulties with academic performance. In some situation barely 5% to 6% of students pass the final examination. Based on feedback we received over the last year, WAY was extended in 2003 to include a *study skills* component. In addition to systematic career counselling, high school students who attend the WAY programme received training in skills to improve their study methods. This component of the WAY programme is executed as a package that is spread out over 8 hours. The specific study skills that we focus on are as follows:

- Skills to improve attention and concentration
- Skills to enhance comprehension and understanding of study material
- Skills make notes
- Memory Training
- Exam writing skills
- Time management skills

This is a standardised programme that has been developed by The Promise Foundation and this year it was extended to all schools in our WAY programme. A variety of pedagogical techniques are used to help students approach learning material in a more systematic and skilled manner. Difficulties with concentration and managing time are two of the most significant difficulties that students experience. Therefore particular emphasis was laid on these two aspects of study skills. Students initially found it difficult to practice these skills. However when some of them began to experience success with these techniques, others began to follow their example.

#### ***6.4. Impact***

Assessment at the end of the year, showed that the programme had helped the students quite significantly. In almost all schools, students' exam performance improved and they were able to secure good marks. Given below is feedback received from a headmaster in whose school the study skills programme worked with great effectiveness.

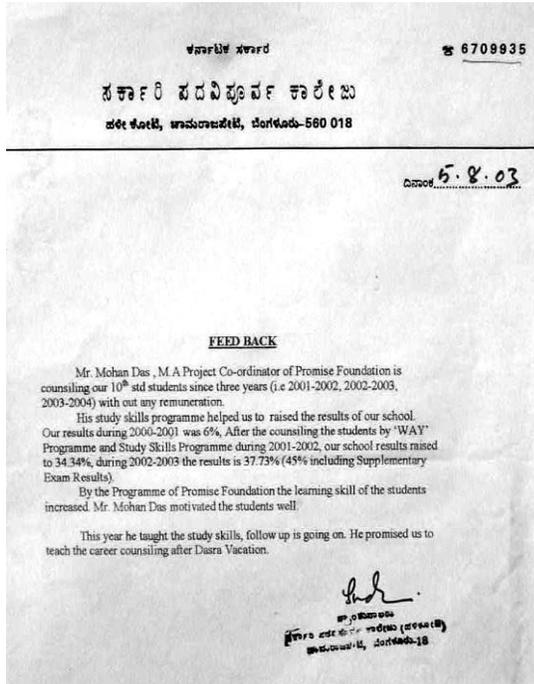
Government of Karnataka  
Government Pre-University College  
Halekote, Chamrajpet, Bangalore

**Feedback**

Mr. Mohan Das, Project Co-ordinator of Promise Foundation has been counselling our 10<sup>th</sup> standard students. His study skills programme helped us to raise the results of our school. Our results during 2000-2001 was 6% (only 6% of students passed the examination). After the study skills programme, our results went up to 45% (45% of the students passed the examination). The Promise Foundation's programmes have helped our students well.

Signed

Headmaster



**6.5. The WAY Programme – summary:**

- Number of schools reached: 38
- Number of students reached: 1459

In summary, the expansion of the WAY method to include study skills has enhanced its effectiveness. Helping students learn better, has not only helped them pass their final examination, it has also helped them to understand what they learn and therefore plan their career development in a more confident manner.

## **7. Visitors**

The year our links with The Friends of The Promise Foundation continue to grow. We had one visitor from Liechtenstein and one from Switzerland.

*Sandra Baumgartner* from Liechtenstein, visited us and worked as a volunteer with us for almost a month. Sandra's time was spent mainly in assisting with the SIP and PAL projects.

*Marc Chassot*, visited us from Friburg, Switzerland. He is a senior careers advisor in Switzerland. Marc visited our WAY projects. Exchange of ideas with him were fruitful and offered learning opportunities for his as well as for the TPF staff. Marc is keen to become a friend of The Promise Foundation.

Our assessment of having volunteers and visitors at The Promise Foundation over the last 2 years has shown us that these exchange programmes are very useful. They offer The Promise Foundation staff an opportunity to learn about other methods and ideas. Visitors have also indicated that these exchanges have broadened their worldview and contributed to their professional development. The Promise Foundation welcomes further expansion to this programme and hopes that we will have more visitors over the coming year.

## **8. Conclusion**

The year 2003 saw significant expansions in some of The Promise Foundation's programmes. Our programmes are now implemented in 2 new cities and the reach of our ideas has increased substantially. The most significant aspect of this development is that The Promise Foundation was able to effect these changes by harnessing *resources already available* in the community. The PAL Learning Centers for example have drawn from existing infrastructure and human resources available in schools. This model significantly increases the sustainability of projects that The Promise Foundation initiates. Since there are no added costs in the form of infrastructure and personnel costs, programmes can continue to be implemented with a reasonable level of effectiveness.

The main factor that has contributed to The Promise Foundation's expansion as well sustainability, is the strong emphasis we placed on *training others* this year. The resources at our disposal were used mainly to train others and optimise the available resources in the community. This has allowed a much wider dissemination of The Promise Foundation ideas and many more children were reached. We hope to be able to continue to follow this model over the coming years.

***Gideon Arulmani,***  
Managing Trustee,  
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Date: March 2004.