

The Promise Foundation

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Annual Report
2013-2014

Background

The Promise Foundation's mission is to address the educational and emotional wellbeing of children and youth in the age range of 3 years to 18 years from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. The Foundation comprises a group of behavioural scientists who conduct research to understand the needs of this target group and develop applications based on the findings. An important principle that we follow is that all the services we develop are culturally and economically relevant and based on sound, indigenous research.

Our Approach

The Foundation has three main departments: early childhood stimulation, literacy development and livelihood planning, for children and youth who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Our approach is two pronged:

- Core Projects: These are programmes delivered directly by our teams.
- Extension Projects: These are programmes delivered through partnerships with other institutions.

New Location, New Targets

The Promise Foundation is now located in Sarjapura which is on the outskirts of Bangalore. This is a semi-urban area with development needs that are different both from purely urban areas and purely rural areas. We have over the last 2 years adapted our methods to suit the needs of the poor in this new location. Given below is an overview of the work that The Promise Foundation carried out during 2013-14.

Overview of Core Projects during the Year 2013-14

Stimulation Intervention Programme (SIP)

SIP focuses on young children in the 3 years to 6 years age range and the parents and care takers of these children, including pre-school teachers. The central theme of SIP is to provide skills and tools to facilitate the cognitive stimulation of children in this age range. SIP offers high quality early childhood care. Through an activity-based curriculum SIP addresses holistic development that is culturally appropriate and focused on preserving children's multilingual identities. Until we shifted to the new campus in 2011, a Shishu Kendra (pre-school) was an important part of our SIP. However in the Sarjapura area where we are now located, we learned that the need was not for a pre-school. Instead the felt need was for community based interventions.

Over 2013-14, SIP was implemented in the following ways:

SIP in the Community: Mobile Toy Library

Toys are essential for holistic cognitive stimulation. However socioeconomically disadvantaged families can seldom afford to buy toys for their young children. Even if they are able to buy a toy, the variety of toys available to the child would be limited. The SIP community based programme addresses this need through the Mobile Toy Library. Every Saturday the SIP team goes with boxes of toys out into the surrounding villages like Kadagrahara and Hosahalli, and nearby locations where construction labourers are housed. Young children, their brothers and sisters (sometimes even their parents and grandparents!), come to borrow toys of their choice. They keep the toy for a week and exchange it for another toy the following week. This programme was initiated in 2012 and has continued through 2013-14 as a big success.



As part of the Mobile Toy Library initiative we conducted two student

workshops in the Government Urdu School, Sarjapura and Government Primary School, Dommasandra. Older students made different types of hand-made toys which were included in the mobile library. A total of 50 students (the majority were girls, but boys participated too!), were involved in this creative workshop.



SIP Settlement Programme

Settlements are locations where large construction companies house their labourers. Housing is usually flimsy, the location is unhygienic and children are left unattended. We have selected such locations to implement some of our programmes both for young children and children in the primary school age group. The SIP methodology has been implemented in a settlement referred to as Sapota Farm close to the Promise centre in Sarjapura, Bangalore. Children in the age range of 2 to 4 years come to the programme and are offered a wide range

of stimulation activities that would lay foundations for later learning as they grow up. Approximately 30 children attend the programme per session.

This programme has an added advantage. Parents in these locations often give the responsibility of taking care of young children to their older siblings. The SIP Settlement



Programme keeps the young child engaged for a few hours. This allows the older child to attend the other educational support programmes offered by Promise.

Programmes for Assisted Learning (PAL)

Research by different agencies from different parts of India has shown that although a large percentage of children are now enrolled in schools, their learning continues to be weak. Of particular concern is that large numbers of children fail to learn to read with comprehension. PAL focuses on this widespread need. PAL is for children between the age of 6 and 9 years who are in primary school or out-of-school. PAL is based on the understanding that reading (literacy) skills are the foundation for further learning. Therefore, the main focus in PAL is to promote the skill of reading. The PAL curriculum focuses both on helping the child learn to read in his/her home language (e.g., Kannada) as well as English.

Culturally Embedded Phonics Programme

This is an approach that we introduced in 2012 whereby we use the child's home language as a way to enter into the sounds and words of English. Since the child's home language is used we call this approach an Indigenous Phonics Programme. We have continued with this approach over 2013-14 and have noted that it offers a strong base upon which the child's language skills can be developed.



PAL Settlement Programme: Shabd Majaa Board

The construction boom in our cities has led to the migration of families from other parts of the country to find work in big cities. These families are usually housed in temporary



settlements on the outskirts of the city. Sapota Farm near Sarjapura is one such settlement. It is made up of temporary shacks built for construction workers and their families. Children in these settlements are often left unattended. Infrastructure is also poor in these locations. We have attempted to address the learning needs of these children by created what we call the *Shabd Majaa Board* through which we implement the PAL activities. Shabd Majaa is an interactive board. It carries materials designed to improve oral and written language such as stories well known to the children in the settlement. The stories are presented in picture form. This is supplemented with cards carrying the key words of the story. Once in 10 days, PAL specialists from Promise visit the settlement with new story material. The story cards are put in sequence and the illustrations are discussed in detail, with English vocabulary being the focus. Children attempt story telling in their home languages—Kannada, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Tamil—and the teacher attempts to rephrase the narration in English. A total of 30 children attend the sessions. We have noted a remarkable increase in interest to learn to read and an increasing awareness amongst parents of the need to send children to school. The success of this method has given us the opportunity to expand the project to other locations which are described in later sections below.

Book Library

The Shabd Maja Board has increased children's desire to look at books and engage with reading material. Hence in addition to the Toy Library for young children, we now have



instituted a mobile Book Library for older children in settlements. Children have the opportunity to borrow books and exchange them for another book a week later.

PAL in Urdu Government School

The school based PAL intervention was implemented over 2013-14 in the Urdu Government Primary School, in Sarjapura. This is a school that caters to children from the poorest families in the area. PAL was conducted at three levels.



Foundations in English using the indigenous phonics method for students in grade 4.

- Foundations in Kannada for students in grade 2.
- Book library for all students in the school.

The programme reached approximately 70 children.

In addition, a PAL Saturday programme allowed children from neighbourhood villages to come to our centre to receive extra help. A total of 50 children between Std. 1

and 8 attended these programmes. These were children from the neighbouring villages of Hosahalli, Kadagrahara and Sompur, and from villages further away including Yemre and Dommasandra.

Work Awareness and You-Jiva programme (WAY-Jiva)

This aspect of the Foundation's work focuses on the career and livelihood planning needs of high school students from poor homes. The tendency amongst poor families is to send the child to work, before they acquire a work skill. While there may be some short term gains in the form of wages, in the long run these youth remain at the unskilled level and are not able to rise very high in their career development.

The WAY-Jiva programme is a career guidance and livelihood planning programme that is designed to help high school students from disadvantaged homes to identify their interests and potentials, understand the world of work, develop suitable career alternatives and make a career plan. Given below is an overview of activities conducted under the WAY-Jiva wing of the Foundation.

Kannada Workshops in Government Schools

Our counsellors conduct group workshops for high school students in Government schools around Bangalore. These programmes are endorsed by the office of the Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI).



Over 2013-14 WAY-Jiva workshops reached 200 students from 3 government schools in the Sarjapura area.

An interesting but important development is that over the recent past, more parents come when we call for parent meetings. There is a significantly greater involvement from the parent and community. Hence all student workshops are followed up with a parent session. During this session the importance of supporting their children for further education is emphasised. Also, detailed information is given to parents about schemes, scholarships and grants and other supports that are offered by the government to families from disadvantaged homes. This information has gone a long way in parents implementing the career advice that WAY-Jiva gives to their children. It has also increased parent motivation to ensure that their children gain the necessary qualifications for a strong career.

Training of Career Facilitators: Jiva Certificate Course

In addition to conducting workshops for students the WAY-Jiva programme also offers training in basic skills for career guidance through a 7 day certificate course. Candidates attend the course from different parts of the country.



Successful candidates are authorised to establish their own career resource centres in their locations using the Jiva materials. We conduct 3 to 4 batches a year. Over 2013-14, 36 candidates were trained in 3 batches.

The area of career guidance has become a highly successful aspect of our work. We are perhaps the only organisation in the country that offers a complete and culturally validated career guidance programme. The programme has also won the attention of multilateral agencies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO). During 2013-14, the Jiva

model was adapted for Vietnam, through an ILO sponsored project. This programme has now become the national programme of Vietnam. Over this year, the Jiva model was also presented in international conferences as key note presentations and as workshops. The Jiva approach has also been included as a module in an ILO sponsored course entitled: Career Guidance Policy and Practice: A strategic tool for Planners and Decision Makers. This is a course that is held at the ILO International Training Centre in Turin, Italy. Two batches have been held so far and through this course the Jiva model has been shared with government officials from 25 countries.

Our objective for Jiva over the coming years is to extend it further into the international circle with particular emphasis on developing countries and formulate an International Certificate in Skills for Career Guidance. A further objective is to develop material using the Jiva approach to address the needs of other client groups such as college students, unemployed youth and disabled young people.

Extension Projects During 2013-14

SIP-PAL Early Learning Programmes

This is a programme conducted in partnership with the IBM International Foundation and IBM India Ltd since 2002 to bring quality educational experiences to children in poverty. The programme, called KidSmart, is offered to schools that cater to children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Each 'Host School' is supported to set up an Early Learning Center (ELC).



Over 2013-14, we set up Early Learning Centres to serve about 530 children in 7 different institutions. These institutions cater to orphans, abandoned children, rescued children and children with special needs. The programme includes teacher training to use the early learning material and support to establish and maintain the early learning centre.

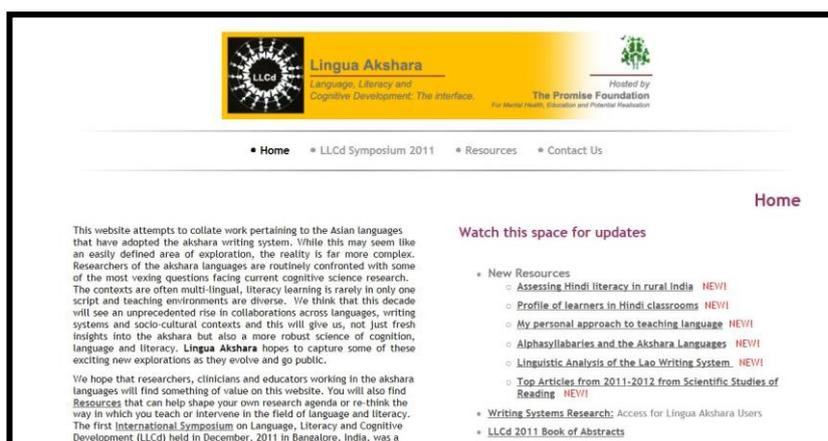
School Screening Project: Final Year

One of the areas of the Foundation's expertise is the assessment of children to understand their literacy development needs. Over 2012 a new tool was developed called Levels in Language and Literacy Screener (LiLaLi). The tool takes about 15 minutes to administer and gives information of the foundation skills that are essential to learn to read. These are the skills for spoken language and knowing the symbols (akshara) of the child's writing system.

The instrument has been trial tested over approximately 600 children. A project with one of our partners, Dr. S.R. Chandrasekhar Institute for Speech and Hearing drew to its conclusion in 2014. At the end of the project we have developed a short but effective screening device to identify children who have literacy development needs. The tool is available for use on a free, open source platform, for specialists who work with children who have difficulties with language and literacy. This includes speech and language specialists, audiologists, special educators, clinical psychologists, teachers and social workers.

Lingua Akshara: A Website for Literacy, Language and Related Issues

The Lingua Akshara website (www.linguaakshara.org) was set up in the year 2011 to collate work about Asian languages that use the akshara writing system.



Over 2013-2014 internationally reputed scholars and academics were empanelled to support the website and the following resources were made available to the public:

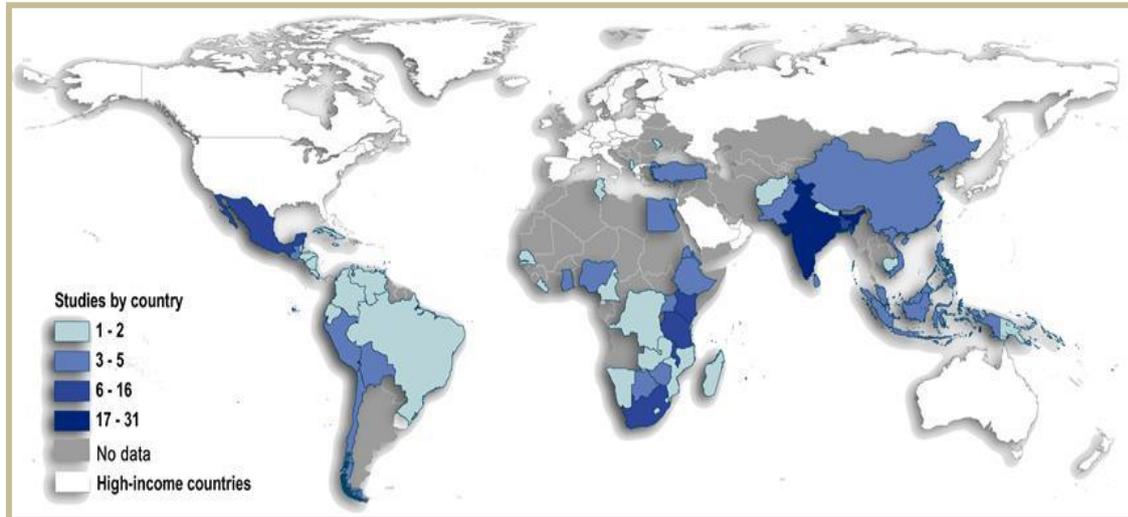
- Reading & Writing: Insights from the Alphasyllabaries of South and Southeast Asia - Sonali Nag & Charles A. Perfetti.
- A linguistic analysis of the Lao writing system - Sigrud Lew.
- My personal approach to teaching languages - Chandrika Mathur.
- Early Years Literacy - Caroline Dyer.
- Early Spoken Language Productions - Shruti Sircar.
- My personal approach to teaching languages - Chandrika Mathur.
- Evaluating the reliability and validity of the ASER testing tools - Shaher Banu Vagh.

Literacy, Foundation Learning and Assessment in Developing Countries

The Foundation partnered with the Department Research for International Development (DfFID), in order to develop an evidence brief pertaining to literacy interventions in developing countries. Technical partners were the University of Oxford, London City University and the University of Durham, UK. This project was completed in 2014. Over 11,000 technical papers were collected and reviewed by a team of 35 academics. The reviews were

summarised into a Lay Summary and an Evidence Brief. These reports are now available for use by the public and are hosted on the websites of the UK government and University of London. The material has already been used and referred to by multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and USAID.

Places where the studies in the review were conducted



Akshar Tara

This project was executed in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh (USA). The objective of the project was to develop an application using mobile phone technology for the teaching of Hindi. The programme targeted students in Grade 4 and used the NCERT curriculum.

The focus of the teaching programme was to help children improve in their reading and spelling skills. The game had 20 cycles of pictures and words, and led children from one level to the next based on their performance. The game allowed a child to ask for help and get clues to improve her performance.

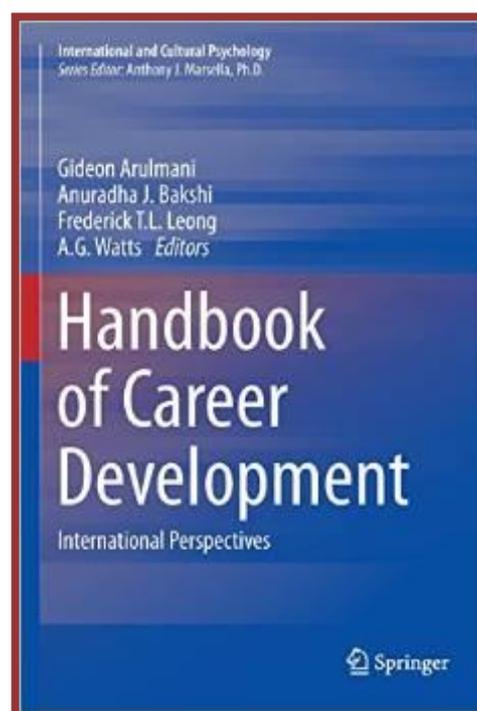
An experimental design has been used to study the efficacy of this intervention. Data collection has been completed and the analysis is presently underway. It is anticipated that this would be a unique intervention that moves language learning out of the classroom, improving the reach of the latest methods to wider audiences.

A flashcard based parallel programme is also available and is currently under trials.

Handbook of Career Development: International Perspectives

The Promise Foundation coordinated the editing of this handbook, commissioned by Springer, New York. It is a compendium of 44 chapters written by authors from 20 countries on a wide range of themes related to career guidance. The book's multicultural vision entails reinterpreting the notion of career for the economically developing world, including for those engaged in traditional, rural and craft occupations. Among the areas covered in the Handbook:

- Innovations in career theory.
- The person in contexts across the lifespan.
- Effective career preparation in a volatile labour market.
- Green careers: work, environmental sustainability, and social justice.
- Enabling culturally sensitive career counselling.
- Services for special groups.
- New directions for assessment, practice, counsellor training, competencies, and standards.



This project was completed in 2013 and the book was published in January 2014. The publication has been successful and university libraries and professionals in the field are acquiring copies of the book in a number of countries.

Financials

Project Costs and Source of Funds

Projects executed at The Promise Foundation for the year 2013-2014 were supported by Grants and Donations. The Foundation received support from friends of the Foundation, as well as institutions and long term donor agencies. The table below gives details.

Project Costs and Source of Funds: Year 2013-14

Project	In Indian Rupees	Project Status
TPF Direct Programmes: SIP, PAL and WAY	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 12,99,900 <i>Source of Funds:</i> FTFP	Ongoing, will continue as core to all projects.
The IBM KidSmart Programme for setting up Early Learning Centers: an extension of SIP-PAL	<i>Cost of Project:</i> CHF 15,99,900 <i>Source of Funds:</i> IBM India Pvt. Ltd (CSR Fund).	The PAN-India project had trainees deputed from ten States.
Akshar Tara	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 99,900 <i>Source of Funds:</i> University of Pittsburgh (USA)	Interventions completed. The analysis of data collected in the course of the project is currently ongoing.

*This is an approximate exchange rate. The fund values are therefore only an approximation following currency conversion.

Conclusion

The Promise Foundation shifted to a new campus two years ago. Over these years we adapted our 20 years of experience in the field to address needs emerging from new audiences. While our learnings continue, we can say at this point that the programmes we have implemented have been successful.

These successes have led to an increase in the demand for our services. We anticipate over the coming year that we will enter into other partnerships through which we would be aim to widen the reach of our programmes.

Submitted by,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature on the left is stylized and appears to be 'G.A.' followed by a horizontal line. The second signature on the right is 'Sonali' written in a cursive style.

Gideon Arulmani and Sonali Nag,
Directors,
The Promise Foundation.
22nd January 2015.