

Chairman's Annual Report for the year 2005/06

I am glad to welcome you all to this first meet of our Board for the year 2006/07. Our program Sikshana is making impressive progress on all fronts, thanks to the overwhelming support that we have been receiving from all quarters. I would like to use this opportunity to share with you the salient features of our achievements during the past year and seek your advice and guidance for future.

Reach of Sikshana:

The year under review is one of consolidation for Sikshana. The program now covers 28 schools with about 8500 children, in the State of Karnataka. Of these, 13 are in or around Bangalore City, with 11 in the South school zone and 2 in the North. I would like to point out here that we have been constrained to withdraw from three schools—two due to operational reasons and one because of acute personnel issues. With this, the number of schools stand reduced to ten. The remaining 15 schools are in a cluster, spread around Kanakapura Town, which is about 50 kms from the City. The latter covering a rural environment is one of the major advances we have made in the field since the inception of the program.

During the year under reference, we have been going through a phase of stabilization and evolution as a sustainable model. We have now reached a stage where another substantial increase in coverage becomes essential to achieve the mission goal.

During my the recent visit to USA, I had a chance to interact with different social action groups such as Asha for Education, AID and Vibha; and discuss with them the problems facing primary education in the public education system in India and the approach we have been taking under Sikshana to deal with them. I am glad to inform you that, as a result, we have been receiving offers of support to maintain and extend the scope of our program on a significant scale. It is a further indication of the inherent strength of our program that some of them are willing to go with us on a major expansion of its reach, subject to our placing a suitable management structure in position.

To start with, two chapters of AID USA have come forward to support ten schools in the City for a year. Vibha USA have agreed to support the existing fifteen schools in Kanakapura, while Asha have offered to support another cluster of 21 schools in the Kanakapura school zone. With the finalization of these offers, we will be reaching a total strength of 46 schools/ 12000 kids.

Assessment of Impact:

You may recall our commitment right at the outset that, under our program, we will set and work all the time against quantified and measurable targets. As a part of this , we had got all of our schools assessed under the Azim Premji Foundation model, using an independent agency. This check, done on a sampling basis, grades each school on a scale of 100, depending on the learning levels achieved in the class room. The tests were conducted by two independent teams of volunteers who were specifically trained for this purpose by APF and Amruth Foundation. Results obtained in the schools from the City and Kanakapura, both at start and at the end of the year are given below. (Figures obtained at start are given under brackets).

Bangalore City

		Start 06-07	Start 05-06
1	K Layout	83	66
2	Chandranagar	77	63
3	CKSandra	65	80
4	Gowdenpalya	69	76
5	Srinivasa Colony	84	77
6	Arehalli	55	49
7	KHalli	76	69
8	Vasanthapura	60	72
9	Gubbalala	56	54
	Average	69	65

Kanakapura

School	Start 06-07	Start 05-06	End 05-06
Kaduhalli	58	66	58
Padavanagere	54	50	56
Jyothi Colony	24	25	64
Hulibele	64	63	84
Aralalu	45	44	34
C'Sandra	61	66	44
Cheelur	74	72	78
Arosh'halli	54	53	65
Uyamballi	43	39	57
Atthihalli	59	64	65
Harohalli	36	31	61
Average	52	51	61

Note:

We test Grade IV students every time, both at start and the end of the academic year. The fresh set of kids who come in from below continue to show poor performance, as the coaching in Grades 1 to 3 still suffer from long term neglect. This is the reason why the 'year start' figures continue to be poor ever year, though the 'year end' scores seem to show an improvement. . Presently our efforts concentrate on the kids from Grade IV to VII, so that at the end of the primary schooling, they would have acquired the basic skills. It may take a few years more for the whole school to acquire the improved performance standards at all levels. This prioritization in our approach is essential to conserve our resources and maximize the impact.

Our near term target for all schools is two-fold: to reach a grade level of 60 or above- **from batch to batch** – as tested at a single point: the entrance to and the exit from Fourth Grade; and to improve the performance by 15% very year. We find that there is a definite indication that this is happening, as seen from the above figures.

In addition to the above, we are also supporting periodic tests to get and give a feedback on their individual performance to the children. We have also introduced the usage of individual diaries in Grades 5 and above, to strengthen monitoring and feedback mechanisms. This step presently in use in City schools is being extended to Kanakapura during the current semester. In this context, it is significant to note that these tests and diaries are extremely popular with the parents, who are keen to know about the progress of their kids; and that these are not part of the curriculum as defined by the State. It is sad to note that all steps to give a meaningful feedback are not given the due attention that this deserves by the present System in position.

Recognition and support for Sikshana:

Besides the above organizations in USA, Fidelity Investments are keen to introduce Sikshana in ten more schools and this is in an advanced stage of finalization. We continue to be a part of Give India and Credibility Alliance; and also supported actively by CAF India from within the country.

I am also glad to inform you that we have received permanent registration under FCRA from the Government of India during this year; with this we will now be able to receive funds from abroad, without any procedural bottlenecks.

Field activities:

We organized a trip to the Science Center of Agasthya Foundation at Kuppam, 150 kms from Bangalore City on 16th July 05. Each school was given an opportunity to send two members – the HM and the Science Teacher. The group was accompanied by a few volunteers to make the visit more productive. Nearly 30 persons made the trip, which proved to be exciting and eventful. The center is doing pioneering work in improving and popularizing the teaching of science at the school level, with focus on the poor kids in State run schools. They have a number of mobile vans which are taken to the schools on day trips and the experiments are demonstrated by trained personnel. One of these vans has covered all our City schools last year, thereby creating tremendous enthusiasm and interest among the staff of our schools to upgrade their skills.

The present trip was to create an awareness, through interaction with Agasthya staff, about low cost teaching aids, their impact on teaching in the class room and the cost effective options available in this context. The group had also an opportunity to interact with Prof Baluragi, who was specially invited to be present for this meet. He is a teacher of international eminence with many monographs on this subject published by UNESCO and the Govt of India to his credit. The impact of his talk on the teachers was so striking that we are now planning for more intensive and interactive sessions in the city and at Kanakapura. We are also glad to note that Agasthya Foundation has been sending their mobile van to our schools so that each school gets at least one opportunity every year to go through its models.

Our book expeditions, initiated last year, continue to elicit tremendous enthusiasm. Every school under Sikshana was given the opportunity to pick up books of their choice through the kids. The scheme has been extended to cover requirements of the teachers also, who have started using this facility to improve themselves. A feature of this year's expeditions was the presence of an eminent personality on each

occasion,; the story telling sessions as a part of this involvement were also resounding successes.

We have initiated dictation hours as a standard feature of Sikshana in all the schools and have been supporting them through liberal supply of paper. A minimum practice session involving two pages every week has dsince been introduced; we are now seeking to extend the scope of this experiment to cover more classes and children so that lack of paper and the consequent lack of practice does no longer lead to poor writing skills. Similar sessions are being encouraged to improve skills in expression through open classes and debates. We are well on the way of ensuring our target that that all kids in Third Grade are able to read and write non-text book Kannada content fluently is achieved during this year.

We organized the annual Delhi trip this year with a larger contingent of 15 students and six teachers. The program is having a major ripple effect on the communities – to an extent we did not anticipate. The sense of pride and 'belonging' that this has elicited, especially in the rural areas, is resulting in greater participation of the community in the affairs of the school. A notable feature of this was the significant increase in the financial commitment to the expenses in the school through groups and local bodies. We plan to study and quantify this impact during the current year; and bring out a paper on it.

We continue to place a large degree of emphasis on extra-curricular activities, as a means of getting greater attention from the kids to the academic program in the school. As a part of this effort, we introduced day long rock climbing trips to the Turahalli forest area, with professional help from the Karnataka Mountaineering Association. We organized four such trips during the year, involving nearly 150 students and 20 teachers. These were such resounding successes that the participation was not confined to the kids alone; the teachers of all age groups undertook the climb! Another surprising feature was the number of girl children opting for this trip despite, what we considered as, possible social prejudices. We have now a long waiting list for these expeditions!

During the year under review, the situation regarding the availability of volunteers in the City continues to cause concern; though the same at Kanakapura is satisfactory, thanks to the active co-operation from the Rotary Club there. We need to address this issue seriously during the ensuing year. With increasing number of schools spread over a wide area, we will now be obliged to recruit and place in the field 'Mentors' on a paid basis, as it may no longer be possible to sustain this momentum solely on the strength of volunteering.

During the year, we celebrated the First Annual day for the Kanakapura schools at an impressive meet held in PES Auditorium in the City. It was a morale boosting event for all those who are involved with program – especially the staff and the volunteers who have been working tirelessly all through the year without any remuneration. At this time, we felicitated the latter with mementoes and also awarded a Rolling Shield to the best school under the program. The shield, which was instituted in the memory of Shri Huile Gowda – one of our volunteers who passes away during the year in an unfortunate accident- was received by the school in Cheelur.

Based on insistent demands from the parents and the communities, we are proceeding with the introduction of English as an optional language for the Third Grade. As a part of this effort, we have been supplying two levels of English books/

Note books for use in the class room in all our schools. This will have a perceptible impact on the lingual abilities of the kids and reduce their work load in Fifth Grade. We are heartened to observe that some of the schools have voluntarily opted to introduce these books from the Second Grade itself.

Financial Results:

We received as donations Rs 13.02 Lakhs during the year, against Rs 11.20 for the previous one. I am glad to inform you that we have been able to overcome the disastrous effect on account of the withdrawal of support from Abbey bank at short notice, and yet post these impressive results. We have been able to continue to implement the program effectively at the targeted level of Rs 20 k per annum in all the City schools; however we were obliged to operate in Kanakapura at relatively lower levels of commitments due to problems of cash flow in the initial stages of the academic year. We hope to recover fully and implement the program with vigor during the current academic year in all the schools under Sikshana.

Some Thoughts on the Future:

The priority for the current year is to address organizational issues pertaining to the implementation of the program in the field. We need to ensure that the quality of delivery of the Model does not suffer for want of due attention. This assumes greater importance in the light of the proposed quantum jump in the scope of our activities, with the induction of new clusters of schools.

Volunteering is another area which requires our attention, as our present strength in the City is inadequate to meet our needs. Our past experience shows that this depends on our 'visibility', which in turn depends on the media coverage of our program and the activities. We need to develop an effective strategy for media coverage of our program.

Since Sikshana is all about decentralization and empowerment, we need to continue to address these conceptual issues and ensure that we do not deviate from them. The schools should be encouraged to come up with their own analysis and solutions for their problems. Such a step alone will ensure that the gains obtained will be sustained, even if the support under Sikshana is withdrawn.

We need to evolve suitable mechanisms for phased withdrawal in the case of schools which have been under Sikshana for a period of 5-7 years.

Conclusion:

Taking all that we have done into account, it appears that we are well on the way to our first goal of ensuring that every student, by the time he/she reaches Std III, attains optimal fluency in reading, writing and expressing in Kannada-which, ultimately, is the essence of primary education.

In conclusion, I would like to place on record my deep appreciation for your support at all times, without which we would not have been able to achieve any of the above. I hope that with your sustained efforts and guidance, we will be able to take more

impressive strides towards fulfilling our mission targets during the coming year. Our thanks are also, in no small measure, due to the large number of donors, supporters and well wishers who have all been responsible for pushing us continuously towards our goals and pursuing excellence.

It is now my privilege to place before you this Annual Report of 2004/05 along with the financial statements for the year for your consideration and approval.

E S Ramamurthy
Chairman

for Sivasri Charitable Trust
06 Aug 2006

Attachment to the Annual Report

Enclosure 1

Details of the honorarium paid to the three highest/ lowest paid volunteer-employees (all teachers allotted to the schools) from the Trust

Highest (in Rs per annum, inclusive of all benefits)

Anne Gowda 24,000
B Prakash 24,000
H C Manjula 24,000

Lowest (in Rs per annum, inclusive of all benefits)

Smt Jayashree 12,000
Smt Shyamala Devi 12,000
Smt Nagamani 12,000

Distribution of salaries: There are only two levels of honorarium- Rs 1000 and Rs 2000 per month.

The Trust does not have any employees under its roll, in the real definition of the term. It does pay honorarium to the volunteer teachers, who work on its behalf in the schools. We have 10 persons in this category, of whom 3 are male and 7 female – the number however varying form time to time.

Enclosure 2

Expenses on International Travel

Details of international travel during the year by personnel of the Trust:

NIL

Enclosure 3

Remuneration for Trust Members

No remuneration is paid to any of the Trust members, including the Chairman and the Treasurer- in any form, direct or indirect.