

Chairman's Annual Report for 2006-07

I am glad to welcome you all to this first meet of our Board for the year 2006/07. Our program Sikshana is making good progress on all fronts, thanks to the generous 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:

Though we intended the year to be one of consolidation, I am glad to report that the number of schools under Sikshana increased substantially from 28 to 46 schools, with about 10,000 children. This was due to the addition of a cluster of 21 schools in the Kanakapura Zone, for which we received additional dedicated support. We have now reached a stage where a New Phase involving a substantial increase in coverage is called for in order to achieve the Mission goal. We have accordingly decided in our deliberations during the year that we will try and seek extension of Sikshana under such a Phase to cover all upper primary schools in the Kanakapura School District, involving an addition of about 100 schools; and that this will be our focus during the current and ensuing years.

Organization:

We have always felt that our Program needs to be run professionally and that this requires an optimally structured Organization, that does not unduly burden the resources of the Trust. As a part of this, we have inducted, during the year, a Program Director / COO of Sikshana in Mr Prasanna, who comes to us with impressive credentials and track record. He will be responsible for the implementation of the program, with the specific task of ensuring compliance by all schools to the concepts and practices of Sikshana. To assist him, we have placed in position one Mentor with suitable qualifications for each cluster of schools. Arrangements have been made for these Resource Persons to visit their schools at least once a week.

Volunteers have always been the backbones of our program. The picture regarding the Volunteer strength in City, though continuing to be fluid, has shown some improvement; the group consisting of about 15 young professionals has now organized itself into an autonomous entity and has been functioning effectively. If successful, this pioneering effort will be worth a detailed study and emulation in due course. The volunteer base continues to be satisfactory in Kanakapura, with most of the 12 members staying with the program for a third consecutive year.

It is recognized that a new management structure will however be required to meet the needs of the emerging new Phase, as scaling to higher levels will pose major challenges. One of the options that we need to consider seriously at this stage is to get an intern from a reputed Business school to come and work with us for a few months, with the specific objective of evolving a suitable Organizational model for the proposed scale of operations. This study should cover fresh and innovative concepts such as joint adoption and franchising of Sikshana.

Recognition and support for Sikshana:

We continue to maintain our accreditation with Credibility Alliance, which gives an assurance to prospective donors that we adhere to International norms and standards applicable to Voluntary Sector. We have been receiving consistent support from other reputed Organizations like Give Foundation and CAF in India, besides Asha AID and Vibha in USA. At the Corporate level, we received significant assistance from Adobe, Bosch and GE.

In effect, Vibha is giving total support for covering all program expenses in the 15 schools

comprising the first cluster in Kanakapura, while the Seattle chapter of Asha is providing similar help for the other cluster of 21 schools in this zone. AID is covering a major part of the expenses in the City schools. The support from Bosch has been towards providing scholarships for 108 children in the KP schools. Adobe and GE are funding our efforts in multimedia based teaching. While the former has enabled us to take note book PC's to primary schools, the latter has brought in as many as 100 plus desktops and note books. As a result, we are in a position to announce with pride that every one of our schools has now at least one desktop and a note book; our efforts should now turn towards ensuring effective maintenance of these units in the field and also to provide appropriate content to be used with them.

Performance of Schools under the Program

As you are aware, we have been placing considerable emphasis on quantifiable targets for our program as a measure of quality enhancement in learning levels; and on monitoring the performance against them as a measure of our success. As an indication of our commitment to this concept, I am bringing to your attention in some detail the results that we had achieved in our schools during the year under review.

One of the tools used by us in this context is the series of assessment tests under the APF model. The results obtained in these tests in the first cluster of 15 Kanakapura schools at the beginning of the current academic year as well as at the end are given below:

School	Start 06-07	End 06-07
Kaduhalli	58	77
Padavanagere	54	83
Jyothi Colony	24	74
Hulibele	64	93
Aralalu	45	67
C'Sandra	61	82
Cheelur	74	82
Arosh'halli	54	73
Uyamballi	43	91
Atthihalli	59	77
Harohalli	36	77
Average	52*	77*

Improvement during the year averaged nearly 50% in this cluster.

Our target was to ensure that every school registers a minimum of 65% which signifies an acceptable level of proficiency in the class room, against a State average of 40%. We have also persuaded the schools to accept a challenging task of improving the actual score by 15% in a year. Results above show that the schools have done commendably well against these goals.

The second cluster of schools in Kanakapura was adopted late in the year and hence we were able to carry out only one of the two tests; these figures, reproduced below, still give an idea of their current academic standards for future reference.

Sl	School	Girls-Kannada	Girls - Maths	Boys-Kannada	Boys- Maths	Average
1	Shivanahalli	80	61	82	49	66
2	Nallahalli	76	63	66	59	66
3	Kallahalli	87	73	84	70	78

4	Halagondanahalli	68	86	62	80	74
5	Thungani	92	76	82	60	78
6	Dodda Kabballi	61	42	56	44	51
7	Maralebekuppe	66	64	70	70	68
8	Krishnaiana Doddi	86	84	70	70	78
9	Kotekoppa	70	51	66	52	60
10	Bannimukkodlu	78	76	80	84	80
11	Alanatha	62	26	48	12	37
12	Kadushivanahalli	88	80	88	88	86
13	Hegganur	74	80	84	72	78
14	Narayanapur	72	74	82	68	74
15	Kachuvanahalli	76	74	84	82	79
16	Acchalu	84	75	62	52	69
17	Hosahalli	38	72	72	84	66
18	Hukunda	68	62	60	56	62
19	Arakere	68	56	80	60	66
20	Mullahalli	70	52	88	58	65
21	Chikkalegowdana Doddi	86	78	76	58	75

Results from similar tests conducted in the City schools are given below:

School	Start 06-07	End 06-07
K Layout	84	77
Chandranagar	77	69
CKSandra	64	68
Gubbalala	53	64
S Colony	84	92
Arehalli	55	57
KHalli	76	66
Vasanthapura	60	58
GPalya	69	88
Average	69	71

Since many of these schools are going through Sikshana for the second/ third year, a certain element of stability is seen in these numbers. Evidence of sustained and enhanced academic standards is also seen in these results.

We are also trying to evolve other quantitative and qualitative benchmarks, to supplement the above assessments. One of them relates to the number of students who get or cross a Grade, such as C+. Schools have voluntarily come up with a target that all students in Stds V / VII , barring those who are challenged in some respect, get a Grade of B or above, which corresponds to 50% in terms of the overall score; this is against the systemic requirement of 35% (C plus), a target met by not more than 50% of the students at the State level. The pilot run on this basis in the KP schools conducted over a single semester between Dec 06 and Mar 07 yielded interesting results, reproduced below:

SL No.	Name Of The School	Dec 06	Mar 07	Total Strength	Final %
1	HAROHALLI	35	27	161	17
2	CHEELUR	8	5	47	10
3	PADUVANGERE	18	15	26	58
4	JYOTHI COLONY	1	2	37	5
5	ARALALU	4	Nil	23	0
6	HULIBELE	19	Nil	29	0
7	UYYAMBALLI	11	10	25	40
8	HOSA DURGA	35	31	105	30
9	HUNASANAHALLI	6	8	65	12
10	ATHI HALLI	7	13	25	50
11	SASALAPUR	12	9	31	28
12	HALSURU	12	8	23	34
13	KADAHALLI	7	7	22	31
14	HAROSHIVANAHALLI	8	9	24	36
15	T.HOSAHALLI	1	2	18	11
16	THUNGANI	14	13	88	15
17	KALLAHALLI	0	Nil	20	0
18	HALUGONDANAHALLI	7	4	30	13
19	MARALEBEKUPPE	18	4	28	15
20	KRISHANAI HANADODDI	0	30	45	65
21	NALLAHALLI	38	13	41	32
22	HEGGANUR	0	Nil	15	0
23	NARAYANPUR	16	Nil	33	0
24	ARKERE	6	4	11	37
25	HUKUNDA	26	15	47	32
26	KOTEKOPPA	2	1	23	5
27	MULLAHALLI	18	17	35	48
28	KADUSHIVANA HALLI	3	2	10	20
29	DODDA KABBALLI	2	3	18	16
30	BANNIMOKODLU	23	8	42	18
31	ALNATHA	0	7	33	21
32	SHIVANAHALLI	45	22	79	27
33	ACHALU	68	28	77	28
34	KACHUVANAHALLI	2	1	26	4
	TOTAL	472	318	1362	23

Explanatory Note:

- ✓ Initially, some of the schools adopted the overall Grade for this study while others interpreted that even one sub-standard Grade a single subject qualifies. In March 07, we have implemented the latter norm uniformly. This accounts for some major

discrepancies in individual cases under the above statement. The significant result however is the decline seen, in spite of the fact the latter results are under a more severe interpretation.

- ✓ It is also significant that 77% of the students are passing with the bar set higher at 50%. Eight of the schools register less than 10% of the students failing to qualify under this norm; this is in spite of the 'abnormal' conditions that govern admissions to these schools.
- ✓ 15 of the above schools are going through Sikshana effectively for the second year, while the other are going through the first- commencing in Sep 06.

I would like to mention here that we are also trying to evolve similar criteria of a qualitative nature, and I expect to share them with you by next year.

Events and Activities

One of our major initiatives, that we set a great store by, is the provision of scholarships to meritorious kids from each of our schools through high schooling. Though this step extends beyond our focal area of primary education, it has a great bearing on our program since it generates the high level of motivation needed for kids to try and excel , in addition to providing the incentive to stay in the system without dropping out on economic reasons. We have been paying a monthly stipend of Rs 150 under this scheme to the best three children from each school for three years until they complete X Std. We had ongoing sponsors for the City schools and the 1st Cluster of KP schools until last year. I am glad to inform you that Bosch has funded us to extend the scheme to all KP schools for 108 more students. With this, our scheme will be covering about 200 students, making this possibly as the largest such venture in the Public Education system at the primary level. Full details on the Scholarship awardees as well as their progress in High School are being uploaded to an open web site, in addition to our own, for public viewing and comments. We intend to help as many students as possible among these to emerge as role models for the new generation of students in their respective schools and communities.

Our stress on Library Expeditions and Dictation Hours is seen to be paying rich dividends, in terms of more kids being able to read and write non-text book Kannada fluently. We are well on the way to reaching the goal of having all kids in III Std achieve this learning level. We are trying to evolve a similar target for English which is being given the importance due to it as the Second Language.

The annual educational tour to Delhi took place this year too, accompanied by tremendous enthusiasm from all including members of the community. More than 100 kids took part in the process of selection; eventually, 25 kids and six teachers qualified and participated in the tour. The kids who took part but could not qualify were offered a day long consolation trip to Mysore.

The KP schools had their Annual Day accompanied by competitions and cultural activities. The School in Hulibele was awarded the Huile Gowda Rolling Shield for the best school in the zone for 2005-06. As has been the practice in the past, the newly inducted schools in the second cluster of KP were also given a day long exposure to TQM concepts and techniques. The feedback was very positive; during the current year, we intend to carry out an audit on all the schools which have had this training once. Based on this, we are planning to have appropriate refresher courses, in order to maintain the momentum.

A major event of the year under review was our decision to depute a teacher from one of our schools to work in and get a feel of the education system in USA for a short period. We were fortunate to get an offer from the County school District in Austin, Texas to host this person, along with a number of Kannadiga families there who came forward to host this person and provide the necessary local logistic support. As a result, we could send Mr Rajashekhar of

Hunsanahalli UPS to USA on Mar 26 for a duration of six weeks; he has since returned from his trip and is in the process of sharing his experiences with his colleagues. He is also planning to use some of the ideas which he had acquired during this trip in his school. The eight teachers who vied for this slot but could not get through were all sent to a week long residential training camp in Yercaud, in which they received exposure to essential skills such as team building, leadership and brain storming besides a crash course in spoken English.

Another notable step was the production of a 15 minute video film on Sikshana, which happened to be long felt need with multiple applications. I am glad to inform you that the clip which has since been uploaded to our own web site as well as to other popular sites such as Youtube and Google Videos, has been receiving excellent response with hits and downloads exceeding 1000 till date. It has also resulted in establishing many fresh contacts and getting us additional avenues of support.

Other events/ activities of importance include conducting semester examinations in an improved format, organization of Inter-school events, supply of diaries to all students in Std V and above and supply of note books to meet a good part of the total requirements in the school.

A start has been made with lesson planning in selected schools using the PC's supplied and I expect that the results from this experiment may be the highlight of the next year's report.

Financial Results

I am glad to place before you the audited financial results for the year 2006-07. You will note that the receipts have reached Rs 42.42 lakhs against Rs 13.05 lakhs registered during the previous year. Expenses for the year amounted to Rs 32.04 lakhs, leaving a healthy surplus of Rs 10.38 Lakhs at the end of the year. The Balance sheet as well as the other documents comprising the statement are appended to this Report for your consideration and approval.

Looking into the Future

I am sure you will all agree with me that Sikshana has now reached a critical stage of evolution and is poised for a significant leap. There are a few major issues that face us at this point of time, which we need to critically assess and address in the coming months.

The first pertains to the restructuring of the Trust in order to make it a more professionally managed Institution. The existing one which catered to the needs while the program was tiny and compact may no longer be adequate. The Board may also need to be expanded to include professionals from other/ diverse fields to make it more effective.

The expansion of Sikshana into Phase III needs new management concepts and models, as extrapolation of the current systems will certainly fail to meet the new challenges. We need to induct a Senior/ Reputed Professional or appropriate Managerial expertise to study and recommend suitable Organizational models for adoption by us. It may not be out of place to highlight the fact here that most voluntary sector efforts fail at the stage of 'scaling up'.

We also need to take a fresh look at the funding strategies for the future; there should be a better balance between local and foreign receipts. Relationship with Donors should be on a long term basis so that we are able to plan our activities on a firm footing.

It is my personal assessment that many Individuals and Organizations, with whom I have been in touch, are really impressed by our Concepts and performance. However in order to convert this to support in concrete terms for the next phase, we need to have facts that prove our model is working beyond doubt and in an incontrovertible manner. In this context, we need to go in for a performance audit by an external/ reputed agency and publish the results. Further the modelling studies which I have referred to elsewhere will have to prove that our proposed model is scalable and viable. I have no doubt that we will be able to take a major step towards

achieving our Mission Goal if these requirements are met.

Summing up, I think it is time for us to think BIG and act too appropriately.

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 2006/07 along with the financial statements for the year for your consideration and approval.

Sd

E S Ramamurthy
18 Aug 2007