

Chairman's Annual Report for the year 2004/05

I am glad to welcome you all to this first meet of our Board for the year 2005/06. Our program Sikshana is making good 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:

Sikshana presently 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. The remaining 15 schools are in a cluster, spread around Kanakapura Town, which is about 50 kms from the City. The latter, funded by Abbey Bank UK and covering a rural environment, is one of the major advances we have made in the field, since the inception of the program.

Apart from this, 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 may become essential to achieve the mission goal.

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

1	K Layout	95	(41)
2	Chandranagar	94	(56)
3	CKSandra	81	(66)
4	Gubbalala	95	(57)
5	Srinivasa Colony	94	(69)
6	Ittimadu	80	(51)
7	Arehalli	76	(46)

8	KHalli	68	(66)
9	Vasanthapura	88	(35)
	Average	86	(54)

Kanakapura

1	HSHalli	69	(52)
2	Uyyamballi	64	(39)
3	Attihalli	63	(60)
4	Cheelur	82	(72)
5	Halasuru	59	(39)
6	Aralalu	50	(44)
7	Jyothi Colony	42	(25)
8	Padavanagere	54	(50)
9	Hulibele	87	(63)
10	Chowkasandra	66	(66)
	Average	64	(49)

You will observe that the results show a significant increase in performance, ranging from 30% in Kanakapura to 60% in the City. This is against a modest 15% goal which we set for ourselves at the beginning of the year. The figures are being analyzed and will be taken up with the staff of the schools for replication and further improvement during the ensuing year.

In addition to the above, we are also supporting periodic tests to get and give a feedback on their individual performance to the children. In this context, it is significant to note that these tests 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 being continuously diluted in the 'official system' based on misplaced perceptions.

Recognition and support for Sikshana:

During the year, we received formal accreditation from CA (Credibility Alliance) , signifying that our systems conform to international standards. We will do our best to keep up this level of performance in order to assure present and prospective donors of our credibility. We have also started receiving offers of support from various chapters of AID (Association for India's Development); a total of USD 10k has been committed so far, subject to our producing the necessary approvals under

FCRA. Taken along with other offers of assistance from Organizations such as Asha, this shows increasing awareness and acceptance of the concepts of Sikshana.

On the corporate front, we have been able to get the following companies to support our program for the year:

HP India
Aztec Software
Torry Harris Business Solutions
British Airways

A lot more remains to be done to retain and expand this base.

Field activities:

All the staff of Kanakapura schools were given an introduction to Total Quality Management in a series of three one-day workshops held by the Institute Of Quality of CII. The program was well received with the active participation of all concerned. The concept of building Quality into all the steps leading to a learning level enhancement is slowly sinking in.

The library movement is going strong with more and more schools opting to send their students for browsing and selection of books of their choice. Those which have implemented this program are reporting significantly enhanced reading skills in Kannada. Following the same pattern, we have started implementing writing sessions, backed by free supply of paper, to bring about an increase in writing skills. Results are being monitored closely for course corrections. Our target of ensuring that all kids in Third Grade are able to read and write non-text book Kannada content fluently is about to be achieved during this year.

Apart from spot prizes, which is a unique feature of Sikshana, we are also supporting annual prizes and competitions regularly in all schools. Fifteen kids who have performed well in seventh grade examinations and who run the risk of dropping out due to various constraints are being helped with Scholarships at the rate of Rs 150 per month in their respective high schools up to the stage of passing the Tenth Grade. With more of our schools getting upgraded to upper primary schools, this number needs to be enhanced further in the current year.

Field trips and excursions are another feature of Sikshana, on which we place considerable importance. During the year, we supported many trips to locations such as HAL Heritage Museum, Airport and Planetarium. The highlight of this program was however the trip which we organized for eight selected kids on a week long visit to Delhi, accompanied by five teachers. These students were selected on the basis of a comprehensive test conducted covering the best from all the 28 schools; the test itself conducted by an independent agency attracted lots of interest and attention-being the first of its kind to which they have been exposed.

With five of the selected kids not having been inside a train in their life, the Delhi trip elicited tremendous enthusiasm and was as an unqualified success. The students had even a chance to meet the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka and three other Cabinet Ministers at Karnataka Bhavan, and have a meaningful interaction with them! There has been an impressive fallout of this on the community as well.

Another notable event this year was the video meet organized between one of our schools and a 'sister school' in Wisconsin. Ten students from the school at Arehalli and six from the US school interacted with each other for more than 90 minutes, seeking information from each other on their life in the school and the community. It was a memorable experience for our children and brought home to them some aspects of the current trends in information technology.

Workshops were held, with assistance from volunteers in HP India, to train the staff from our City schools on the use of PC's and multi-media based educational techniques. This was followed up by special sessions on the use of Baraha, which enables them to input text in Kannada. One of the fallouts of this was the creation of expertise among them to use the PC's to prepare question papers for the periodic tests and examinations in-house. We have successfully used this in the last two conducted in Dec 04 and Mar 05.

Five of the schools had voluntarily come up with a proposal for publishing a house journal; this was put to shape successfully and the first edition of what they had named as "Sikshana Vaahini" was brought out in Dec 04. This is expected to grow further this year with the involvement of more schools.

Milestones for the year:

The performance during the year was marked with specific instances of achievement , which may be deemed to be milestones on our path. These are:

- 100% pass in VIIth Std examinations, the highest individual score crossing 90%
- 30% plus increase in the learning levels across the board in all our schools
- reverse migration of students from private stream into a Govt school on merit
- enhanced image of the school, resulting in greater participation from the community
- achievement of the targeted reading skills at Std III in Phase I schools
- optimal computer literacy in all schools where PC's have been introduced
- introduction of English in Stds III and IV
- successful induction of volunteers from abroad into our system

We are aware that we have lots of ground to cover still in many critical areas.

Financial Results:

We received as donations Rs 966,312 during the year, against Rs 494,321 for the previous one. We have been able to continue to implement the program effectively at the targeted level of Rs 15 to 20 k per annum per school. This, of course, excludes the cost of posting teachers and construction of additional class rooms. The audited results for the year are enclosed.

A major part of this inflow is from Abbey Bank UK who supported the entire program in the Kanakapura zone, covering 15 of the 28 schools under Sikshana. This makes us vulnerable to the continuance of their support and further emphasizes the need for broadening our donor base.

Some Thoughts on the Future:

The priority for the current year is to consolidate the performance at these levels in all schools and to enhance them further in those under Phase I. We also need to look at innovative models, such as franchising, to replicate this attempt at other locations. In order to establish the statistical validity of our program and the results, we need to expand the coverage, at least, to 50 schools.

To be able to achieve the above target, we need to take active steps to broaden the donor base and attract greater corporate involvement. 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.

Since Sikshana is all about decentralization and empowerment, we need 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.

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 for your consideration and approval.

E S Ramamurthy
Chairman

for Sivasri Charitable Trust
25 Aug 2005

Enclosure 1

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

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

Anne Gowda	24,000	
Manjunath	24,000	
Bheema Shankar		24,000

Lowest

Smt Veena	12,000	
Smt Shyamala Devi	12,000	
Smt Nagamani	12,000	

Distribution of salaries

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 3 persons in this category, with an annual remuneration of Rs 24000 and 7 with Rs 12,000. Of these, three under the former are male and all the rest are female.

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.

