

The Promise Foundation

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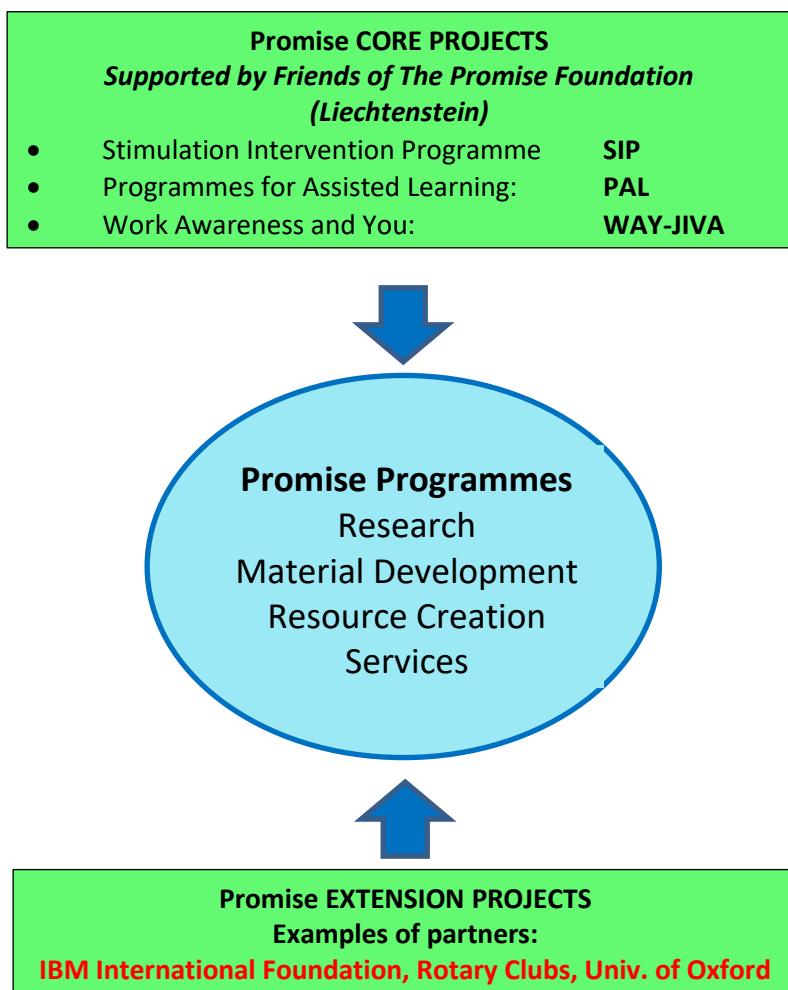
Annual Report September 2012 to September 2013

Introduction

The Promise Foundation's central mission is to develop and deliver services that would contribute to the potential realisation of children and young people in the age range of 3 years to 18 years, from disadvantaged backgrounds. A key guiding principle is that all the services we develop are culturally and economically relevant and based on sound research.

Our Approach

The Promise approach is two pronged: Core Projects and Extension Projects. As shown in the figure below, our **Core Projects** are delivered directly by The Promise Foundation team. Our **Extension Projects** are delivered through partners.



Over 2011-12, we moved to a new campus and a new location – [Sarjapura](#). This town falls on the outskirts of Bangalore and is surrounded by a number of villages. It is a semi-rural / peri-urban area. Over 2012-13, our main emphasis was to review the needs of the local communities and ensure that our services would be relevant and appropriate. Before moving to this new area, we had already conducted summer camps, home visits and workshops in the schools of the region.

An important observation that emerged from this initial activity was that Sarjapura is a rapidly urbanising location. A number of farmers have sold their lands and a large number of apartment blocks are springing up here. This creates certain **special social and economic conditions**. For example, **farmers** now have much more money and want their children to study in "English Medium Schools". In contrast, we found that because of the massive construction industry, this area was seeing a big inflow of **migrant workers** who use this peri-urban location of Sarjapura as a base to find jobs in Bangalore city. Many of these workers are severely exploited. They come with their families and live in temporary housing. The schooling of the children in these families is irregular and the language they speak is alien to this location. They are often left unattended.

It is against this background that the work of The Promise Foundation was carried out during 2012-13.

Core Projects: Overview

The Promise Foundation runs three core projects that address the needs of three age groups: pre-schoolers, primary schoolers and school leavers. Given below is a brief overview of the each of our Core Projects.

Stimulation Intervention Programme (SIP)

The primary target group of SIP is young children in the 3 years to 6 years age range. The secondary target group is the parents and care takers of these children. One of the difficulties encountered by children from disadvantaged homes in this age range is reduced **cognitive stimulation**. It is now well known that when children face lower cognitive stimulation in the early years, they are high risk of educational difficulties. The focus of SIP therefore is to offer high quality early childhood care and education that could lay strong learning foundations for young children. SIP is based on a comprehensive activity-based curriculum that addresses all round development that is culturally appropriate and focused on preserving children's multilingual identities. SIP programmes are delivered through the Promise Shishukendra which is a preschool offering early childhood care and education. The SIP curriculum is also offered as a training programme for those interested in working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Programmes for Assisted Learning (PAL)

PAL is for children between the age of 6 and 9 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 or neighbourhood language (Kannada) as well as English (a language that families link with future success).

Talk, hands on, text and publish are the four sections of a PAL session. A typical PAL class lasts for about two hours. The session begins with **talk**: exploring ideas in one's own words. The

activity next moves to **hands on**: writing out words that a teacher has picked. These may be words which must begin with, for example, the /k/ sound, or must be attached to the meaning ‘from’ or be long so we need five claps to break them up. From here children move to **text**: reading the passages for the day. This is when children must voice their understanding of the chosen passage. Children then move to **publish**: writing their own materials. Children author books, and in looking around the room, they encounter many other books, printed editions, teacher developed books and other child-authored books.

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

Young people from disadvantaged homes, because of the urgency to earn, often tend to enter the world of work without qualifications. As a result, they remain at the unskilled level and although they work very hard, they are not able to enjoy the career success that is due to them. WAY 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. WAY was expanded to include many more aspects of career development and is now called the Jiva Programme.

Jiva functions at two levels. The first is to conduct career guidance workshops for high school students. The second is to build capacity for delivering career guidance services through training programmes. We have developed a certificate course in career guidance that is offered over seven days. We have also started a doctoral programme in career guidance.

Core Projects: SIP 2012-13

Promise Shishukendra (Preschool)

A section of the new Promise building is designed for the Promise Shishukendra. It is a lovely, large room with plenty of sunlight and space to play. Our surveys showed that a Muslim community in the nearby Sarjapura town would benefit the most from our Shishukendra. A series of meetings were held with the community leaders and parents.



As seen in the picture above, there is a strong interest in the Promise Shishukendra and parents are keen to have their children join the programme. However one of the difficulties they are facing is the **distance** from their homes to Promise (about 4 kilometres). We are hopeful that the community will organise itself to bring their children to the Shishukendra.

Mobile Toy Library

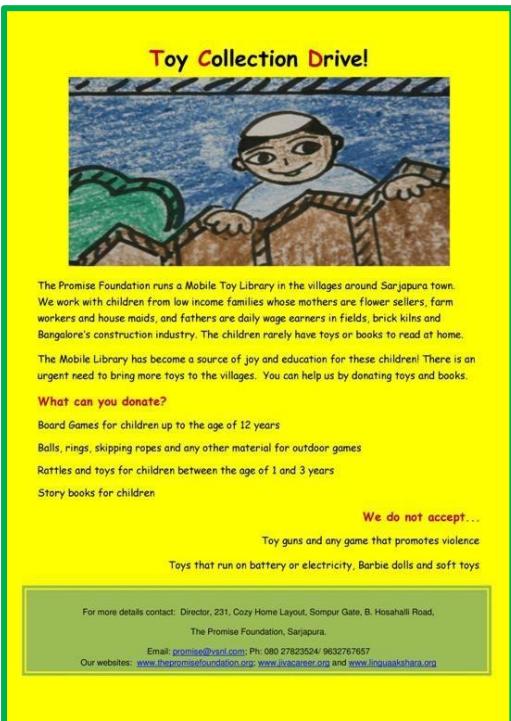
Our survey also showed that many of the children in the 3-5 years age group are already going to pre-school. However these pre-schools do not address the learning needs of the children in a comprehensive way. While we are waiting for children to come to our Shishukendra, we have started a project where we go to them with something they love – **TOYS!**

The Promise Mobile Toy Library



So a new project that we have started is the Promise Mobile Toy Library. Every Saturday, our SIP team goes to the local villages with big boxes of toys. Children come with their brothers and sisters and parents to "borrow" toys of their choice. They keep the toy for a week and exchange it for another toy the following week!

Toy Collection through Face Book!



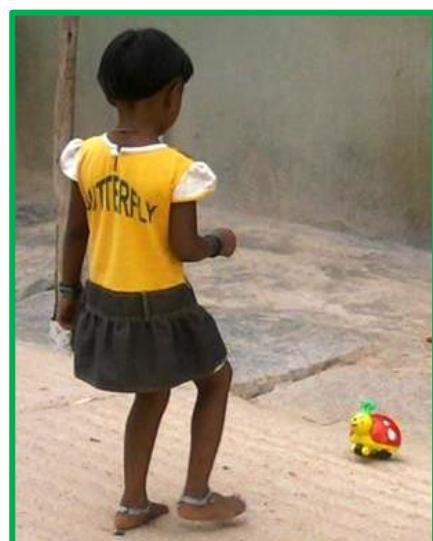
The first attempt was a success! So we put out a request on Facebook for people to donate **used toys**! That too received a wonderful response! Now we have



a regular stream of toys being given to Promise. And every week a child in the village can take it home! In this way, Promise has entered the life of the child and involved the entire community

Even grandmothers have become involved!

The community the Promise is now a part of is a community that is presenting new challenges for early childhood education. Children are enrolled in low quality pre-schools, and parents are not yet aware of what their child may be missing. It is our attempt to innovate and meet these challenges always keeping the child at the centre of efforts.



Core Projects: PAL 2012-13

Culturally Embedded Phonics Programme

Our surveys in the villages and low-income communities around Sarjapura had shown us that many families were keen to teach their children English. They consider this as the language for social mobility, and hoped that by investing in an English education they could improve the life chances of their children. English, in their mind, is the language for getting good jobs. Our surveys of schools in the area however showed that either English education was non-existent or offered in a manner that only led to a [memorizing](#) of some common phrases. Children did not really learn to speak and read well in English. We decided to start a pilot project to develop a simple and easy to understand English learning programme. We knew that schools would only give us a few hours a week to deliver our programme and had to prioritise what we would do in this short time. We decided to use the child's [home language](#) as a way to enter into the sounds and words of English. This is what we have come to call the [Culturally Embedded Phonics Programme](#). This is a phonics programme where we teach children the sounds of letters in English such as the sound for 'ch' or 'ae', and the programme is 'embedded' because we turn to the child's [mother tongue](#) to find a close sound in that language. Some of the poorest families around Sarjapura speak Urdu at home, and our surveys show us that the children from these families drop out of school to go into paid labour as unskilled assistants and remain trapped into this low wage position into adulthood. Our first attempt with our Culturally Embedded Phonics Programme therefore has been with the Urdu language.

The lesson plans for the sessions follow the four part PAL lesson of Talk - Hands On – Text – Publish. The key learning outcome we anticipated from the programme was the skill for recognising the sounds of letters in simple words like 'hut', 'rupee' and 'kurta', and blending these sounds to read the word. A parallel learning outcome was that children [read for meaning](#). We aim to achieve this by ensuring that children develop skills for decoding letters in words, but also develop a sight vocabulary: a set of quickly recognised words. Reading for meaning is also targeted through a lot of sentence reading (connected texts rather than using endless word lists) and the teacher being a role model for reading for enjoyment.

In order to implement the Culturally Embedded Phonics Programme we have had to learn about the home cultures of the children in the programme, re-think our conceptions of what a 'good' book for introducing reading is, and how to support vocabulary development and spoken language proficiency when the time available is very limited. We are on a sharp learning curve but realise we have a long way to go before we have a programme that truly bridges the home language with the outside language of English.

Government Primary Urdu School, Sarjapura

This was the first setting where we offered the Culturally Embedded Phonics Programme. The programme was conducted for 16 students of Grades 4 and 5 between February and April 2013. A

total of 23 sessions of 2 hours duration each were conducted. Children were taught the sounds of letters, given practice in blending sounds into words, and reading skills using short, hand-made story books. In keeping with the overall PAL methods, each 2 hour session consisted of the following:

- A Talk activity with a Story. The story session aimed to introduce English through a narrative and with a focus on 5-6 words to improve children's oral vocabulary and sight vocabulary.
- A Hands-on activity with the sounds of 2 letters, and plenty of word practice to show how the letters sound and blend with other letters.
- A Text activity to support reading for meaning by using sentences from the story read earlier in the session. Children had to read and complete the sentences.
- A Publish activity which involved each child preparing a story card for herself. Children were supported with partial texts. Children also had the opportunity to illustrate their story cards. These story cards are taken home after editing by the teacher.
- The last 30 minutes of each session involved children reading stories in pairs. This aims at improving exposure to print and confidence to attempt reading, as well as encouraging peer-learning. During this free reading session, children sit on the floor in pairs and choose any book to read. Simultaneously, at least three children read one-to-one with the teacher each day. The role of the teacher is to ensure that every child has individual time for shared reading with the teacher.



At the end of the programme, our aim was for each child to have 'published' 16 story cards. Children at the Urdu School produced these with enthusiasm and in our follow-up sessions we have noticed that the children cherish and preserve these with pride! The picture shows some of the original story cards made by the children, displayed on a *Read Me! Wall* that is managed by Promise in the Urdu Primary School.



Indications of impact

- Attendance: This Government School, as with many other such schools, is struggling with poor attendance. However the PAL days saw better attendance, with children waiting eagerly for the sessions. Children also displayed great enthusiasm to catch-up with work set on the days they had been absent from the PAL session. We found them working in their own time to complete the PAL work so that they could be on par with their classmates for the next PAL session.
- Student Response: The programme was well received by the children. Child-made material was displayed in the class despite teacher's warning that it will not last a week. To our expectation, but to the surprise of all the staff at the school, children were very responsible about the material. All the wall displays and hand-made reading materials survived, until they were given away to take home at the end of the programme.
- Learning Outcomes: The picture above shows some of the story cards made by the children. Good improvement was seen in their word attack skills, letter and word identification and reading of simple text. Before the programme, most of the children could not do beyond letter recognition, with some children having problems in that as well. After the programme, a majority of the children attempted at sounding out the word, coming closer to the letter sounds in the word and displaying some successful attempts at new words. Children also displayed a change in their attitude to reading – reading for pleasure, not just as a means to pass exams.

Challenges

We have found that whatever our method, it has to withstand the onslaught of entrenched practices in the regular classrooms. Teachers reinforce rote learning, which is more forceful than the effortful application of a decoding strategy to recognise words. This increases the chances of unlearning the phonics techniques taught through the PAL session. We are aware that our programmes need to be embedded within the routines already present in the school (and at home). We hope to learn more from our follow-up programmes in the coming year. Our rationale is that once

children become aware of the phonics principle, it is practice with a variety of books that will strengthen and make the skill of reading more fluent.

Future plans

The Urdu school has agreed to follow-up programmes and also asked us to offer the programme for the next batch of 3rd and 4th grade children. We will offer a mobile library facility, with teacher supervision. The plan is to visit the school with a set of appropriate books, selected for their cultural content as well as reading level. Children will have a one hour reading session once a week. We envisage the role of the teacher to be both as a partner for shared book reading sessions, dialogic reading asking and answering questions on books just read and demonstrating how words can be decoded using phonic methods and also the context in sentences.

We have learned from the first Pilot of the Culturally Embedded Phonics Programme that we need to increase the practice time, introduce more sight vocabulary and be very supportive for use of the spoken language. We will continue with identifying the sounds that can be quickly bridged between Urdu and English and words and texts that can quickly bring the children's home and culture into the reading programme.

PAL for Children in Settlements

Bangalore is seeing a massive boom in many sectors. Poor families come to Bangalore in search for work. They live in temporary settlements on the outskirts of the city and go to the city for work. Sapota Farm near Sarjapura is one such settlement. It is made up of temporary shacks built for construction workers and their families. They live in abject poverty and children are left unattended.



Children in this settlement are from a mixed language background. There are Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Bengali workers. These children are either not enrolled in school or are very [irregular to school](#). Lack of interest in studies or family commitments to look after younger siblings

and home are the most common reasons for not being in school. It was observed that many children missed school because they overslept or that no one told them to go to school.

We have initiated a very special programme for these children that extends the PAL principles and our earlier experiences with PAL. The programme is described below:

Shabd Majaa

Our research has shown very clearly that developing sensitivity to the [sounds of words](#) (phonological awareness) is the most important building block for learning to read. Shabd Maja is based on this principle. *Shabd* means sound. *Majaa* means fun and enjoyment. So, Shabd Majaa means [enjoying and having fun with sounds!](#)

Shabd Majaa is implemented through an interactive board. Given below are pictures of the board being erected by the parents of the children in Sapota Farm.



The Shabd Majaa Board carries materials designed to improve oral and written language. [Stories](#) well known to the children are selected. Story cards are made with photographs of painted cut-outs in

real settings. This is supplemented with cards carrying the **key words** of the story. The objective is not the “moral of the story” but to use something that is well embedded in children’s experience to teach English words.



Two Cats and the Monkey!



The Fox and the Crane!



The Thirsty Crow!



The Dove, the Hunter and the Ant!

The stories immediately caught the children’s attention and they began to come to the Shabd Majaa Board. 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 Kannada, Hindi or Tamil and the teacher rephrases the narration in English.





Six to eight words from the story are introduced and displayed on the board. Children practice the words and read out during the next session. Younger children are encouraged to practice simple vocabulary like names of animals, action words, or describing words. Older children are encouraged to read the story card, or identify the words in the story card.



The story is also given to the children in small [booklets](#) which they can take to their homes. The display on the Shabd Majaa board remains for the next 10 days and children can come and look at the pictures and words whenever they can or want to.

A total of 14 sessions have been conducted with 15 children aged 4 to 14 attending the sessions over about 6 weeks. The results have been impressive.



The young children in the group have developed a much higher awareness of [print](#) (e.g., which is the right side up for a book). This is the first step toward learning to read for that age group.



Receptive and Sight [vocabulary](#) have increased remarkably. Three of the older children can read the full stories in English. Some of them have even asked for a newspaper to be left behind so they have something “more” to read!

Shabd Majaa is a new approach to teaching and learning. For children in a settlement like Sapota Farm it has the following advantages:

- It is child-mediated and the teacher is only a facilitator.
- Children who cannot be regular to a class have access to a learning resource (the Shabd Majaa Board) all the time. Therefore, attending “class” regularly is not essential.
- It opens the possibility for peer learning. We have seen that a child who misses a “class” is given “tutoring” by his/her friends on what was done in the class.
- This brings children into the learning environment spontaneously rather than by force.

PAL and Shabd Majaa

Shabd Majaa is an open, relatively unstructured learning resource. Our success with this method gave us the opening to begin PAL for the children in Sapota Farm.

PAL (Kannada):

As the attendance improved and the children became more focused, the PAL Kannada programme was introduced. Three 1 hour sessions per week are conducted in the morning before school hours. A total of 26 sessions were held as on 30th August. 12-18 children aged 7-14 attended the sessions.



In addition, 5-11 children aged 1-4 years were given parallel exposure in the form of play material and books. This was necessary as these toddlers are left under the care of the older siblings attending PAL.

An immediate outcome we noticed was a [greater motivation](#) both amongst children and their parents to attend school more regularly. The PAL class is held before school time and we found that the children get ready for school before 9 am and await the arrival of their PAL teachers. We see smiling children with tidy hair and neat uniforms in contrast to the earlier sleepy faces with un-

brushed teeth, shabby clothes, and untidy hair. Coming ready for our classes also ensured that the children could go to school soon after the PAL session, thereby improving their school attendance.

PAL (English)

A set of 15 sessions in Culturally Embedded English Phonics was planned for the children at the Sapota farm. The PAL (English) programme at Sapota Farm involved the introduction of English **letters**, blends and diagraphs, associating them to their corresponding Kannada *akshara*.



The programme focused on hands-on activities, providing practice in sounds and simple blending techniques. No writing was involved. Each one hour session included story reading, revising sounds of each letter, blending and forming simple words using letter cards.



Other activities included matching the Kannada akshara to the corresponding sounds in English, and identifying the beginning sound of each child's name, objects in the surroundings and colours.

The immediate outcomes we are seeing is that children are able to understand the **basic principles** of learning to read in English. Our aim is that at the end of the programme they would have developed the foundations for basic English reading.

The Saturday Programme

We run a PAL session every Saturday for about half a day. The programme benefits children in the neighbourhood villages. Each session consists of the following:

- Five-Corner Learning Model: The Five Corners are the Reading Corner, Craft Corner, Technology Corner, Writing Corner and the Games Corner. Children are divided into small groups with opportunities to explore different activities. In keeping with the PAL Model, sessions consists of the Talk Period, Hands-on Period, Text Period and the Publish Period.

The Saturday Programme is delivered in two groups. Children studying in grades 2 to 5 are placed in Group 1 and those in grades 6-8 in Group 2. Children in Group 1 are given a complete Kannada programme, with a short English session. Children in Group 2 are given a complete English programme, with a short Kannada session. Over this year a total of 40 sessions were held. We saw a lot of children drop in, but they were not very regular. Children's attendance ranged from 2 to 12 days, with many children bringing along visiting cousins and neighbours. It is clear the Saturday Programme has grown to be a children's club in the region!



Challenges

The Saturday Programme at Promise Centre faced many challenges, with a need for a new strategy to overcome each one. The present challenge is dropping attendance due to various reasons within the community and due to the location of the Promise Centre. Some of the challenges are:

- Families whose financial status has improved because they have sold their lands are moving their children out of Government Schools and enrolling them in private fee-paying schools. These children spend more time on tuitions to cope with the demands of education at these schools.
- Poorer children are moving to hostels for studies. These hostels are far from home but linked to assured enrolment in a government school.
- The Saturday Programme expects children to come to the Promise Centre which is located away from the 'main road'. This causes a fluctuation in attendance since children come as and when they can.

Future plans

We have begun a fresh survey to look out for children who have an urgent need for educational support. We are seeking out new shanties where newly arrived migrant workers settle. We are also seeking out partners who run orphanages and other shelters for children from very low-income families. Some children attend the sessions regularly and have shown great improvement in their reading and writing skills. We would like to continue being available to these needy children who are our links with the community we serve.

Core Projects: WAY-Jiva 2012-13

The WAY-Jiva part of the Promise core projects is delivered at two levels: Career Counselling Services for high school students and Training of Career Facilitators.

Career Counselling Services for High School Students

WAY-Jiva counsellors visit schools and through the workshop format help children with their career choices.

Kannada Workshops in Government Schools



WAY-Jiva reaches students who are just about to complete their high school. Without career guidance, many of these students would enter the world of work as unskilled labourers

Our programmes in government schools are endorsed by the Deputy Director of Public Instruction—the government department that manages school education.



The primary target of the WAY-Jiva programme is to help these students find their talents, make appropriate career choices and link them to the opportunities that are already available for them through government sources.

English Workshops in Private Schools



English workshops are aimed at children from middle class homes. Without career guidance these children could choose educational pathways for which they are not suited and may finally reach careers at which they may struggle to succeed.

The workshop in this picture was conducted in partnership with the Rotary Club of Hosur, a neighbouring town.

The WAY-WAY-Jiva programme is also managed by counsellors who have been trained in the Jiva Method. The programme is integrated into the school timetable and is conducted by the school counsellor with minimal support from Promise.



WAY-Jiva workshops are also conducted at the Promise Centre. These are small group sessions and are conducted directly by the Promise Jiva team.

Parents are an important part of all our programmes. We conduct workshops that help parents understand their role in supporting their children's career choices.



Training of Career Facilitators: Jiva Certificate Course

An important and highly effective part of the WAY-Jiva programme is the training we offer through a 7-day certificate course in Basic Skills for Career Counselling. These training are held in the [Promise Youth Training Centre](#) in our campus.



Interested candidates join the course from different parts of the country and learn the skills for implementing the Jiva Programme. Selection of candidates for the training following a rigorous process of assessment.

Successful candidates receive the authorisation to use the Jiva Kit independantly and deliver career guidance in their locations around the country.



An example of our successful trainees conducting a Jiva workshop directly with students.

The Jiva Certificate course has gained in popularity and is today much in demand. We conduct 3 to 4 batches a year and have until now conducted 15 Batches.



● Indicates location of Jiva Counsellors in different parts of India.

As indicated in the map above we now have a network of Jiva trained career facilitators spread out almost throughout the country. Our next target is to organise this group and continue to support their professional development with regular refresher courses and updates of new ideas and material. An important development is that the Jiva Certificate course has won the attention of other developing countries as well. We are presently in negotiation with countries such as Vietnam and Nepal to extend the certificate course to these locations.

The Jiva Method has been presented in scientific journals and international conferences. The feedback received indicates that Jiva is perhaps one of the few projects that has taken a non Western and culturally sensitive approach to career development. Jiva is presently aimed only at the High School student. Our aim for the future is to extend the Jiva Method to other groups such as College Students, Rural Youth and children with Special Needs.

Core Projects: Reach during 2012-13

Shifting to the new Campus has required Promise to re-evaluate its projects and service delivery style. Some of our projects have remained unchanged. But others have been adapted. Some new ideas have also been introduced. Given below is an overview of the children and their care takers that SIP, PAL and WAY-Jiva reached over 2012-13.

Project Name	Target Group	Location	Number of children/adults
SIP – Mobile Toy Library	Preschool children	Villages close to the Promise Centre	150 – 200 children
PAL (Kannada) PAL (English)	Primary school children	Schools around Promise Centre	45 – 50 children
PAL (Saturday Programme)	Primary school children	At the Promise Centre	20 – 30 children
PAL – Shabd Majaa	Pre-school and Primary school children	Sapota Farm close to the Promise Centre	20 – 30 children
WAY-Jiva Kannada	High school students from disadvantaged homes	Government High School Students Schools around Promise Centre	150 students
WAY-Jiva English	High School students from middle class homes	Private schools and Small Group workshops Schools around Bangalore and at Promise Centre	607 students
WAY-Jiva through our trainees	High School students for varied backgrounds	Different states of India – See Map above	More than 3500 students
Jiva Certificate Course	Adults working with youth. Example: Counsellors, Social Workers, Welfare Officers, Teachers	At the Promise Youth Training Centre.	Batch 13, 14 and 15: 29 successful trainees.

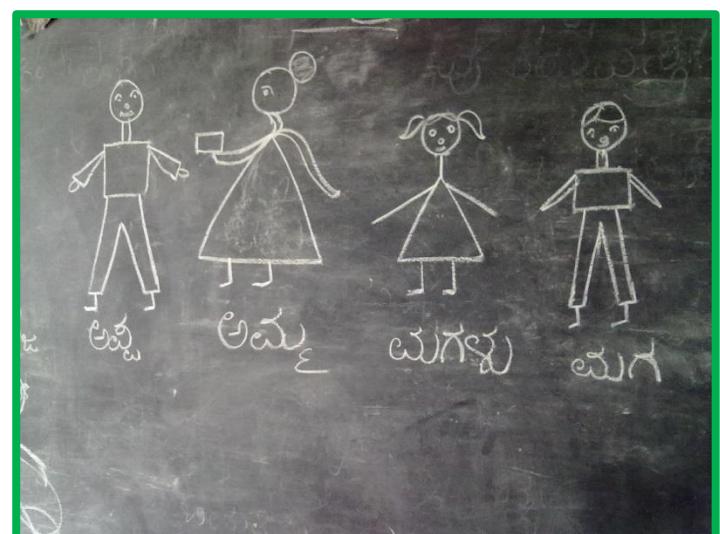
Extension Projects During 2012-13

Early Learning Programmes in Government Schools

IBM International Foundation and IBM India Ltd. have partnered with The Promise Foundation since 2002 to bring quality educational experiences to children in poverty. The programme, called KidSmart, is offered to government schools. Each 'Host School' is supported to set up an [Early Learning Center \(ELC\)](#) which follows the Three Corner Model. The Three Corners are a) the Reading Corner where books and reading activities occur, b) the Craft Corner where drawing, material making and book illustrations are done and c) the Technology Corner where educational software are explored. Typically one theme binds the activities in the three corners into one whole. Children

spend about 20 minutes in each corner and rotate to experience the material available in each corner. This Model and a philosophy that values peer learning and multi-lingual learning environments were conceptualised by The Promise Foundation for the Indian classroom. As in the earlier decade, over 2012-2013 IBM rolled-out the project in multiple locations around the country with NGO partners. In all locations, Teacher Handbooks developed at Promise were distributed to train teachers on the Three Corner Model and unique philosophy of the ELCs.

In the Bangalore region, Promise set up Early Learning Centres to serve about 500 children in 9 government schools and 1 NGO run school for children with HIV Aids,. We made school visits for teacher training, offering lesson plans and conducting demonstration classes. We also carried demonstration worksheets and low/no-cost ideas for improving children's reading skills.



The government schools in this batch of 2012-2013 were keen at the outset, but as the year went by, they each faced several challenges. These challenges are symptomatic of the current educational system in the area: a) severe shortage of teachers, b) unexpected school closures, c) delays and no follow-up on administrative decisions and d) multiple administrative duties assigned to teachers disregarding their teaching time. These processes have all impacted the smooth execution of the project, and seven months into the project, we concluded that "*the programme is running but in an extremely diluted way. There is little hope of sustaining the programme unless government officials begin to own the programme and set their own standards of implementation*".

Future plans

IBM India Ltd. has reviewed the situation with government schools and found that they are unable to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the relevant government representative. IBM has therefore decided to withdraw from the government school sector for 2013-2014 and has requested for a partnership with NGO run centers. Promise has identified 8 orphanages and shelters for abandoned and destitute children in and around South Bangalore. The new Early Learning Centers will be set up in these settings, and become the new location for Promise's extension projects.

School Screening Project

Over the years, Promise has developed considerable expertise with assessment of children. This work of developing assessment material has occurred in parallel with our focussed work of developing good quality intervention programmes. One such test popular since 2000 is the simple set of tests called [Literacy Acquisition Battery \(LAB\)](#) which helps develop a profile of skills of all children in class. In the process, LAB also helps identify who are the most vulnerable, and which are their areas of strength and weakness. This helps teachers in partner schools develop a more responsive teaching programme, and Promise teams to offer systematic PAL sessions.

Over 2009-2011 a new tool was developed called [Levels in Language and Literacy Screener \(LiLaLi\)](#). Unlike LAB which takes one hour to administer, the LiLaLi takes about 15 minutes. While LAB gives information on reading, writing, spelling and level of reading comprehension, LiLaLi 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.

Sample of questions from LiLaLi:

A. Language at home			 5 min	/6	
In Lali's house her <i>ajji</i> tells her stories. In your house does anyone tell you stories? (If yes, note who tells, in which language, and ask child to narrate part of story)			Who tells?	/1	Language? / .5
			Narration:		/ .5
In Lali's house her <i>amma</i> reads newspaper, her <i>anna</i> reads school books. In your house who reads what?					
B. Nonword Repetition			 3 min	/35 (R =)	
I will say some funny words (Lali knows a funny language). Listen to the words carefully and repeat it exactly.					

In October, 2012 The Promise Foundation entered into [a collaboration with Dr. S. R. Chandrasekhar Institute of Speech & Hearing \(Dr. SRCISH\)](#) to carry out screening of children with language and literacy difficulties in the community and in schools. The SRCISH is a teaching institution in Bangalore with graduate and post-graduate students who specialise in Speech, Language or Hearing, and many among them show an interest in working with children from low-income communities.

As per this collaboration, SRCISH on its part will identify schools and children to be screened. The role of the SRCISH would also be to get informed consent from school authorities/parents as

required, and to provide the technical staff/interns/students for screening and conduct screening programs in the community and schools. In return, Promise will provide the test protocols for screening, train the assessors and analyse the data to develop sensitive and specific methods of scoring and analysis. One short term objective of the project is to check how closely the findings from the 15 minute LiLaLi Screener can capture information that longer one-hour tests capture. If we can show that the LiLaLi is sensitive it will bring down testing time and save investment in cumbersome testing protocols. A second short term aim is to monitor the level of training needed for the work of the assessor to be reliable and valid. If the LiLaLi can be used by lower levels of technical staff, and lay persons with a short orientation, this too would help reduce the cost of conducting screening camps in schools.



Future plans

The collaboration with SRCISH runs till December, 2014. It is our plan to use this time to ensure that a) the LiLaLi reaches a fair degree of sensitivity in identifying vulnerable children and b) we offer interventions for reading difficulties.

Other Activities During 2012-13

Lingua Akshara: A website for literacy, language and related issues

A screenshot of the Lingua Akshara website. The header features a yellow background with a circular logo on the left containing the text "LLCd". To the right of the logo is the text "Lingua Akshara" and "Language, Literacy and Cognitive Development: The interface.". On the right side of the header is a green tree icon. Below the header, the text "Hosted by The Promise Foundation For Mental Health, Education and Potential Realisation" is visible.

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. We were keen to find good quality research work about the contexts that many children in poverty find themselves in: they are bilingual or multi-lingual, they learn to read in a language that may not be the home language, they have to learn to read in more than one language and each language may have a different script, and the teaching learning environment may be diverse and starved of materials. As we state on the

website: 'We think that this decade will see an unprecedented rise in collaborations across languages, writing systems and socio-cultural contexts and this will give us, not just fresh insights into the akshara but also a more robust science of cognition, language and literacy. **Lingua Akshara** hopes to capture some of these exciting new explorations as they evolve and go public.'

Over 2012-2013 we made public three new resources valuable for researchers and practitioners :

- Characterising language proficiency in Hindi and English language: Implications for bilingualism research (Tanya Dash & Bhoomika Kar)

Excerpt from the paper: 'Self reported information predicted objective performance for L2 but not L1. Greater interdependence of L1 and L2 was observed for the reading/writing domain as compared to the speaking/understanding domain.'

- Interventions for Language Impairment: can neuroscience help? (Dorothy Bishop)

Excerpt from the lecture: 'We should put at the forefront of our research endeavour studies of behaviour particularly when our intention is looking at intervention and not be totally seduced by all the neuro-scientific things that are going on around us...'

- School underachievement (Sonali Nag & Maggie Snowling)

Excerpt from the e-chapter: 'The criteria for 'diagnosis' must be agreed within the context of the local educational setting.... sensitivity can correct the mainly acultural nature of descriptions in diagnostic manuals.'

Future Plans

Over 2013-2014 we wish to empanel key academics to help develop the website. The first person to accept our invitation is Prof. Purushottam Patel a pioneering theorist about the akshara.

Literacy, Foundation Learning and Assessment in Developing Countries

In this project we summarised evidence from developing countries on *Literacy, Foundation Learning and Assessment in Developing Countries*. Six Technical Reports, one Lay Summary and an **Evidence Brief** has produced by a collaborative team from the Universities of Oxford, City and Durham with The Promise Foundation (India). These reports and briefs will be available for governments, NGOs and teachers who work for children in developing countries, similar to the settings where Promise has worked over the last two and half decades.

The Figure below gives the logos of all collaborating agencies:



The Promise Foundation



**CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON**



The project was funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), which is the department of the government of UK for international aid to low and lower-middle income countries in areas such as education, nutrition and health.

The first aim of the project was to describe literacy and foundation learning in developing countries, considering both 'inside out' factors (e.g. a child's cognitive and linguistic skills), and 'outside-in' factors (notably home literacy environments and classroom practices). The focus was on language and literacy up to Grade 8 and mathematical reasoning and numeracy learning up to Grade 2. A second aim was to assess the evidence for interventions in developing countries.

Methodology

The focus of the review was research published from 1990 to 2013 that focused on low- and lower-middle income countries. A comprehensive search of 18 bibliographic databases and expert recommendations yielded 11,424 sources. Screening, data extraction, critical appraisal of methodological quality and cultural sensitivity followed strict objective standards. Quantitative and qualitative studies reporting primary data were included totalling to 217 studies (40 Literacy, 22 Language, 22 Numeracy, 17 Intervention, 161 Contextual Factors).

Key findings

Strong foundations in oral language are essential to enable fluent reading with understanding.

Interventions targeting these skills are beneficial for literacy development. If these interventions are delivered early they can provide an effective scaffold for learning across the curriculum.

Class tests specifically for maths, but equally relevant for other subjects, often privilege the school language. When children are supported for reading comprehension, and allowed an explanation of the question as well as giving the solution in the home language, performance improves.

Literacy-related assessment in the early grades has focused on symbol knowledge, and to a lesser extent phonological awareness but neither vocabulary nor grammar which are critical skills.

Numeracy assessment mostly focuses on arithmetic facts and operations and does not include the requisite skills for problem solving, namely mathematical reasoning.

A strong body of evidence shows current classroom instruction is 'top-down', involving much rote learning and not contextualized. Often it fails to make contact with children's own experiences, including their language and their culture. There are relatively few robust evaluations of culturally sensitive interventions delivered in developing countries to improve literacy and numeracy in young children. Some interventions were not explicitly described such that they could be replicated.

The table in the next page outlines examples of interventions from developing countries that have shown improved foundation learning and literacy attainments. Most of these interventions have been delivered for children in low-income communities such as the children that attend SIP and PAL.

Intervention	Study (Country code, Design & Quality rating)	Example of activity
Emergent Literacy	Malmberg <i>et al</i> (2011) KUZ,QED, ↑	'to use locally available low-cost material for children to select, explore and experiment with...' p. 125 ✓
	Kagitcibasi (2009) T, QED, ↑	'...read the storybooks to their children, discussed them (e.g. asking and answering questions)' p. 71 ✓
Oral language inputs	Bekman <i>et al</i> (2011) T, QED, →	<i>Circle time</i> : 'To promote thinking about a topic, sharing ideas, and seeing the cause-effect relationships between events.' p. 415 ✓
	Moore <i>et al</i> (2008) B, Mixed, ↑	<i>Morning News session</i> : 'to encourage more free verbal expression from the children' p. 120
Dialogic Reading	Opel <i>et al</i> (2009) B, RCT,↑	'Some questions asked about the meaning of new words (e.g., What is a boat? What does a boat do? Has anyone ridden in a boat?), and some about the causes and consequences of events (e.g., What happened when Kutus fell from the boat? How was he rescued?).' p. 15 ✓
	Cianca (2012) E, Mixed, ↑	'Before questions: to tap into students' background knowledge of the topic in the book ... • During questions: to monitor levels of comprehension, make inferences, predict, and make connections with the text • After questions: to respond to the book, interpret... draw conclusions.' p. 401
Shared Book Reading	Moore <i>et al</i> (2008) B, Mixed, ↑	'... daily story reading with several new stories each week, ... to read and talk about stories in an engaging manner rather than requiring memorization' (p..120) ✓
	Abeberese, <i>et al</i> , (2011) P, RCT, →,	Students also write their thoughts about the stories in reading notebooks (p. 7). ✓
Phonological games	Nag-Arulmani <i>et al</i> (2003) I, QED, ↑	'...making 'silly sentences' by stringing words with similar initial phonemes into unusual sentences (e.g. 'Swinging swarms of sweets swore they saw Swathi swimming up the swelling river')' p. 55 ✓
	Rollo San Francisco <i>et al</i> (2006) CR,RCT,→	'Work on syllables ... ' p. 193 ✓

Note:

Country Codes:

B = Bangladesh, CR = Costa Rica; E = Ethiopia, I = India, KUZ= Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar/ Tanzania; P = Philippines, T = Turkey;

Quality Rating = ↑ = High,
→ = Moderate

✓ This intervention is also found in SIP and/or PAL.

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 challenge to today's career professional is providing relevant services in the face of rapid, pervasive change. Written by professionals from diverse countries and fields, this progressive resource presents career guidance and workforce development as cross-cultural, multidisciplinary, and responsive to contemporary realities. Advanced analysis allows a deeper understanding of the long-term needs of workers as varied as indigenous peoples, older women, immigrants, international students, and the recovering mentally ill. 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.

The Handbook of Career Development opens out realistic new paths for all involved in career services, including counsellors, psychologists, social workers, human resource managers, educators, youth workers, and policymakers. It is a suitable resource for a range of academic fields such as developmental studies, economics, ecology, and indigenous studies, and makes an invaluable training text for aspiring career counsellors.

The editing of the Handbook has been completed and it is now in the process of production. It is anticipated that the book will be available by the end of 2013.

The Promise Centre: Development During 2012-13

Work on the new Promise Centre has continued and our focus has mainly been on the garden! Here are some pictures!



The front view... flowers and shrubs!



Our first harvest of vegetables!



Our Fruit section!

Backyard!



Rain water harvesting: We have a capacity to store 25,000 litres of rainwater.

Financials

Overview

Projects executed at The Promise Foundation for the year 2012-2013 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 2012-13

Project	In Rupees	Project Status
TPF Direct Programmes: SIP, PAL and WAY	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 11,48,451 <i>Source of Funds:</i> FTPF	Ongoing, will continue as core to all projects.
Literacy, Foundation Learning and Assessment in Developing Countries	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 11,67,818 <i>Source of Funds:</i> Department of International Development (DFID)	Project completed. Outputs include an Evidence Brief for Policy Makers, a Brief Report for the Public and six open-access Technical Report.
The IBM KidSmart Programme for setting up Early Learning Centers: an extension of SIP-PAL	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 15,38,202.00 <i>Source of Funds:</i> IBM India Ltd.	Government permissions to IBM to conduct the programmes has been greatly delayed. Promise supported schools by making school visit, but this was not satisfactory because all partners were uncertain about the future of the programme.
The IBM KidSmart Programme for Teacher Training Handbooks: an extension of SIP-PAL	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 2,25,000 <i>Source of Funds:</i> IBM India Ltd.	The Handbook has been printed and distribution to teachers across has begun through IBM India and Ngo partners
Jiva Book Writing Project: for dissemination of academic and practice- related ideas.	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 2,79,082 <i>Source of Funds:</i> Jacob's Foundation	The International Handbook has been completed. The Handbook is now with the publishers (Springer) and the production phase has begun.
The Promise Foundation General Projects	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 3,46,063 <i>Source of Funds:</i> FTPF	Project completed. Outputs included two new teacher training courses and training materials.
The Promise Foundation Center for Early Learning & SIP-PAL Resource Center: an extension of SIP-PAL	<i>Cost of Project:</i> 2,22,926] <i>Source of Funds:</i> Donations	Development of SIP-PAL Resources.

*This is the average exchange rate. This value is therefore only a gross approximation of the currency conversion on the date of realisation of Grants in Indian Rupees.

Conclusion

Our first year at the new Promise Centre has been a learning experience. Many of our expectations were different from the ground realities. Our initial plan was that children would come to the new Promise Centre and become a part of our programmes. However, one of the key issues that we need to address is the [location of the Promise Centre](#). Since it is quite far from the main road (three-quarters of a kilometre), children who could benefit from our programmes find it difficult to come to the Centre. Hence the Promise Shishukendra has not yet reached its full capacity. A [vehicle or a mini bus](#) to transport children from their locations to Promise would help us bring children to the Centre.

Bangalore too is a rapidly changing city with a constantly changing demographic profile. For Promise, it has been a year of [adapting](#) our last 20 years of experience and making new innovations to meet the needs of children in this area. Over the coming year, we look forward to continuing to understand the needs of children and young people in this area and serving them in a relevant and effective manner.

On behalf of the Board and the Promise team we thank the Friends of The Promise Foundation for your support.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left appears to be "Gideon" and the signature on the right appears to be "Sonali".

Gideon Arulmani and Sonali Nag
15th October, 2013.