

PART NER SHIPS



Akshara
Foundation

EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING WELL

2013-14
ANNUAL REPORT

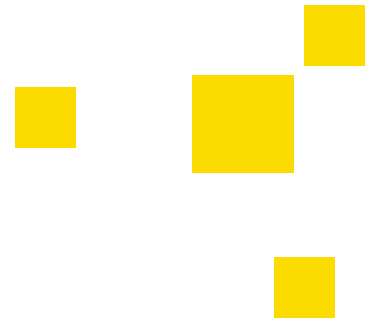


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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

a prescription for future survival



It is no secret that India can reap the demographic dividend only if our education system undergoes significant change. And it is not a question of higher education alone. If the foundations of the education system – pre school and primary school - are weak it would be inconceivable that children will perform well in tertiary education.

Why is early education important?

It is important because India's economic growth and its democratic polity is itself critically dependent on our ability to manage our transition from agriculture to manufacturing and services. And that means generating enough jobs to be able to absorb over 10-12 million young people into the work force every year for the next 20 years.

Developing human capital to scale is not a trivial task. As one can see, even with the available government resources, we have failed to deliver. One of the key impediments to the efficient delivery of quality education to children in India is the lack of accountability of the entire delivery system. Data has shown that over a quarter of the teachers are not in the classrooms during school hours ; the monitoring mechanisms typified by a hierarchy of roles, have all become mere sign-offs to ensure that “the lesson plan has been done” rather than focusing on meaningful outcomes. This is from the supply side. On the other hand, the quality of demand is not where it should be, which to some extent can be attributed to the fact that the parents themselves had no access to education.

So, how do we get the supply and demand sides to intersect for optimal performance?

At Akshara Foundation we have conceived and incubated a framework called the Karnataka Learning Partnership (KLP), which addresses many of the issues. The framework begins with the capture of data on every child with the ability of ensuring a unique ID for each child. The child is linked to a school, which in turn is part of a hierarchy that is administratively used. Each school is geo-positioned and tagged with the District Information System for Education (DISE) code issued by the central-government administered National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA).

With this structure, we can start the process of ensuring that every child is in the system. It can be used to check if the school has the prescribed infrastructure. We can even define quality of learning outcomes and measure this in simple terms to begin with and over time make this measurement more sophisticated.

But the key is - can every one of us participate in this?

At Akshara we believe that it will take a network of non-profits working across multiple verticals - education, health, nutrition etc., to bring their data on children together to tell a story and use this story to galvanize community led ownership of the public schooling system to drive responsibility, accountability and change. Civil society can bring about effective governance and that governance results from partnerships and civic engagements which are crucial in stimulating innovation, participation and empowerment.

So how do we possibly engage various stakeholders in the process of education?

On the Karnataka Learning Partnership site (<http://www/klp.org.in>), we have built a module to allow community members to voice their opinions via the web or through an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) - this draws the average citizen to visit schools and *anganwadis* and respond with their comments. We expect that this will enable us to get individual community members to be involved in the process of improving our schools and schooling. A second one is to make available periodic reports to elected representatives and government officials at different levels with information pertaining to their individual constituencies.

What do we expect in the future?

If we are able to focus the energies of various stakeholders well and strengthen the early childhood education system of this state and show the way for the entire country to adopt this model, we can form a sound basis of future learning, progress and survival. We need to heed the editorial comment in The Economist magazine a little over a year ago which is quite telling: “India's century is not inevitability. It is a giant opportunity that India is in danger of squandering”. Clearly, each one of us needs to stand up and take responsibility - together we can make it happen.

Ashok Kamath
Chairman

Kanchan Bannerjee
Managing Trustee

TOGETHER
WE CAN

- 1) Organization : DRRT
Dwarakanath Reddy Ramanaswami Trust
- 2) Current footprint: Slum communities
- Vyalikaval, Byappanahalli, Sannyasi gunte,
Wahab nagar, Drishya school in Yelahanka
- 3) Would invite resourcing of existing
Jeevanotsava programmes in each area -
for sports, dance, music, theatre programmes
on several (at least 12) Sundays.
- 4) Coordination team → yes for the
Sundays organised in any of the above
slums. showcases its programme

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When you bring different elements together, a diverse set of organisations, each containing a diverse set of skills, and you bring them together, what you are going to get is something much larger than the sum of all the skills that you have.”

TARA KINI, Advisory Board Member, Akshara Foundation

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Hold out your hand... you see five fingers. Each of those fingers are individual, but if you form a fist, it is much more powerful. Five fingers working together to form a fist will always be stronger than its individual parts. A team working together will always be stronger than silos of team members or individuals trying to tackle a task alone.

It is Akshara's belief that large scale societal change can be brought about through collective action and impact and not as a single organisation working alone. All stakeholders involved in pre school and primary education should participate and contribute to the cause of ensuring better schools and education for all children in Karnataka.



In March 2000, Akshara Foundation was established at the request of the Government of Karnataka. It was conceived as a tripartite partnership between the government, the corporate sector and the voluntary sector.

The government took the lead in setting up the organization and allowing access to its schools; corporate leaders lent financial support and community volunteers, mostly young enthusiastic women from slums, helped implement the programmes. In many ways, this is a unique model with a built-in capacity to address change at a mass scale.

Akshara brings people together in partnership:

- We bring together communities, government bodies, local organizations and civil society to design and implement our programmes.
- We supplement the governmental efforts in universalizing pre school and primary education and build the capacity of *anganwadi* workers and government school teachers. This is to ensure sustainability of our programmes.
- We leverage resources from the government, philanthropic individuals and foundations and the private sector to get the most impact for every rupee spent.

GOVERNMENT

At the core of all Akshara's work is our partnership with the government of Karnataka. Akshara firmly believes in working with the government to bring about large scale and rapid changes. The programmes, therefore, aim to supplement the governments efforts in universalizing quality primary education.

All of our programmes are designed to be implemented in government *anganwadis* and schools by *anganwadi* workers and government teachers. Akshara designs the teaching learning material, the training modules, the assessment metrics and provides field support. This makes the programmes sustainable and builds capacity within the school system for improvement. Our approach has allowed the Government to focus attention and resources on clearly identified and defined problematic areas.



COMMUNITY

We engage with communities through participatory methods. Over the years, Akshara has come to believe that sustainable interventions have to involve the local communities by building awareness as well as capacities. Akshara's approach is to encourage parents and communities to take an active role in their children's education and support the local schools. These engagements include ensuring that community organizations mandated by law like Bal Vikas Samitis should function. These are groups of women, mostly, offering support to *anganwadi* workers.

We facilitate meetings to improve the quality of education and improve the infrastructure of the *anganwadi*. We work closely with parents and members of the School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) and encourage them to ensure that the schools function and children learn. Involvement and ownership translate to a higher likelihood of long-term sustainability.



DONORS

Akshara supporters not only donate funds but also their time and expertise. Aside from financial contributions, we also receive numerous donations in kind by way of outings for children from schools, school supplies and study materials. The many ways that people partner with us is making a significant difference.



MULTIPLE NGOS

We work with numerous other nonprofits to disseminate and share our best practices and programmes. Our programme material is available on our website for other NGO's to view, download and utilise in their geographies. Our programme data is also available in the public domain.



To tie all of the above together, Akshara envisioned the Karnataka Learning Partnership (KLP) which is a public platform where the stakeholders involved in pre school and primary education can participate and contribute to the cause of ensuring better schools and education for all children in Karnataka. The Karnataka Learning Partnership is built on a collaborative model with inputs from multiple partners. This effort envisages a system where a network of non-profits working across multiple verticals - education, health, nutrition etc., bring their data together to present a factual assessment and this is used to galvanize community led ownership of the public schooling system to drive change.



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In my 35 years of experience in the Department I have seen many NGOs working, whose motto is to gain only monetary benefits from the projects they do. But I was surprised to see the immense and intensive work being done by this NGO, Akshara, and the impact of their training in the field and the attitudinal changes among teachers who are teaching well with the TLMs. I am very happy.”

K.S. LAMANI, Education Officer, Mundargi Block

PARTNERSHIPS AT A NEW LEVEL

EDUCATION REPORTS TO ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Every constituency had an individually prepared Education Report; with data pertaining to it that was comprehensive and neatly assembled, put together by KLP from its steadily accumulating database on government education in the state.

A partnership Akshara works hard to cultivate is with the government. Akshara meets and interacts with every tier of administration. It is through collaboration with government that real change in education can be taken to remote village schools in Kushtagi, Mundargi and Hoskote Blocks. Says Ashok Kamath, Chairman, Akshara Foundation, “People’s representatives have to work together to make changes happen.” Civil society and non-governmental organisations can co-create that change.

When policy has to be reframed, when an old, worn-out system has to be recast, and accountability, responsibility and a responsive work culture ingrained, elected representatives have the power to do so. They at the top, can be the initiators of change, change that government-provided education urgently needs. Akshara has been pushing for that momentum, for the top-down effect, with a strategy of engaging political representatives with Education Reports of their constituencies.

In April 2013, prior to the Assembly elections in Karnataka, Akshara teams hand-delivered a set of three Education Reports each to nearly 170 MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) candidates in Bangalore. A year later, in March 2014, Akshara repeated the initiative, this time couriering the Education Reports to the 112 MP (Member of Parliament) candidates across Karnataka contesting the Lok Sabha elections.

The Education Reports were designed and developed by KLP, the Karnataka Learning Partnership, an Akshara-incubated project and an independent platform where all stakeholders involved in primary education can contribute to ensuring a better-run, efficiently managed schooling system in the state. The reports in both Kannada and English were:

School Demographics; Financial Allocation Summary; and Infrastructure Summary. They provided a holistic overview of education. A covering letter accompanied every set of three reports. It introduced KLP as a space for sharing and action, a partnership dedicated to education. The reports, the note said, were an expression of hope that candidates would support quality education for primary school children in their constituencies.

Across the political spectrum there was goodwill and a readiness to act. An independent candidate in Rajarajeshwarinagar constituency read the reports then and there and said, “We will do this work together.” A sitting MLA, said, “I know Akshara Foundation very well. I supported a few *anganwadis* after your last reports. I am with you on this.”

It is this spirit of willingness that public education deserves if it has to meet the aspirations of a new generation seeking to better its prospects. Akshara believes that education has to be a performing sector, grooming children who are knowledgeable, fit for higher studies and employable. The Education Reports are an attempt to bring education to the forefront of the political discourse.





Akshara provides training to the BVS members. The focus was on their roles and responsibilities, identifying the problems of *anganwadis* and how to tackle them. The impact of the training was tremendous. It forged a bond between the *anganwadi* and the community.

INTERACTION WITH BAL VIKAS SAMITI MEMBERS

Bal Vikas Samitis (BVS) are government-mandated, community support group for *anganwadis*. The committee is made up of 14 community members and has a sizeable number of women, all of whom meet once every month.

Akshara has succeeded in reviving failing or defunct Bal Vikas Samithis in many centres. BVS members have been taking the initiative in all the *anganwadis* to solve major issues like building maintenance. Minor problems like a leaking tap, a missing blackboard and peeling paint are being attended to almost immediately.

Across the community, from Gram Panchayat Presidents and members to BBMP Corporators and local leaders, there is recognition and appreciation for Akshara's work in strengthening preschool education, highlighting the *anganwadi* as a child's first step to education and drawing focus to *anganwadi* workers' problems. The programme's espousal of the *anganwadi* elicited heartening response from local leaders, as a result of which some centres functioning in a poor environment were shifted to a nearby government school, community centre or rented place.

Nallooramma, a BVS member, says, "I attended Akshara's training and learnt how the BVS can support my *anganwadi*, what our responsibilities are. I call for a meeting once a month where we discuss the *anganwadi*'s problems. I am proud to be a BVS member."

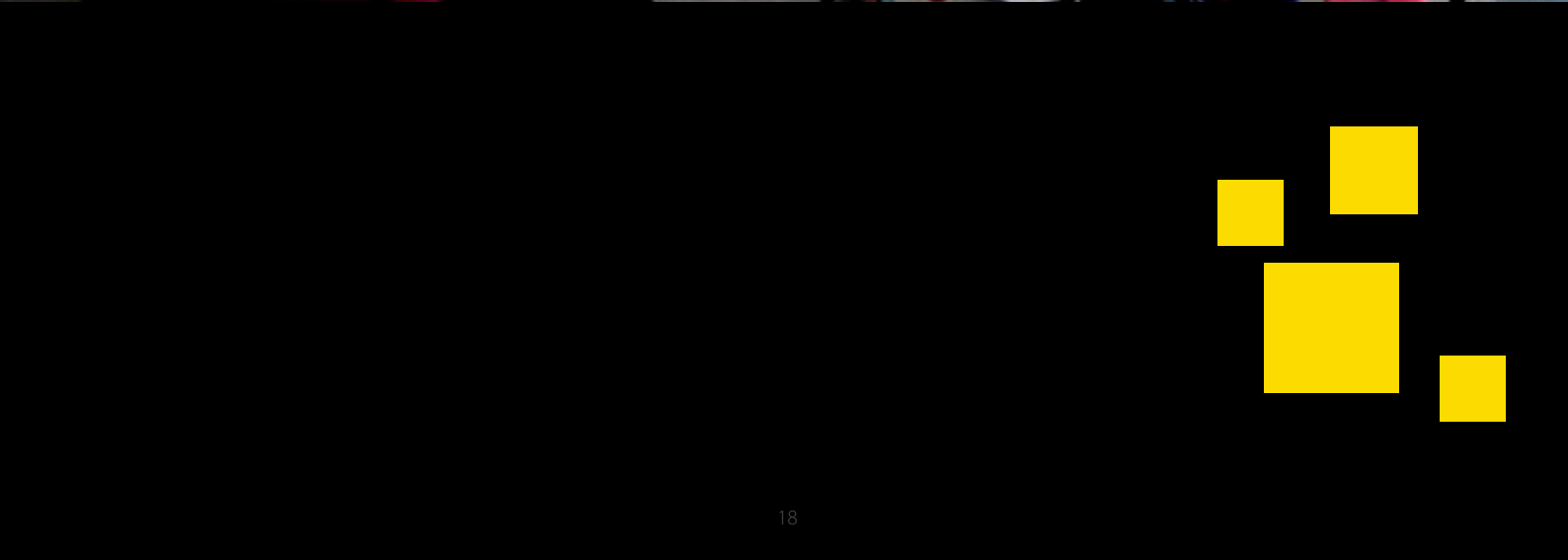
PARTNERSHIPS AT WORK



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“I am the elder daughter and will always have to help my mother at home as well as in the field. I convinced my parents to let me attend this camp. I really felt elated to be a part of it. It was a different world for me, which I had never dreamt of. These three days of the camp have brought new life to me. I will study well and become a useful, productive citizen of society. I request my volunteer-teachers to continue this work.”

SAVITHA HIREMATH, class 7



CREATIVE DIALOGUE

Akshara started the Creative Dialogue to harness the power, expertise and reach of other civil society organisations to make this change. The purpose of the Dialogue is to make it easier for the children of Bangalore to empower themselves.

The Creative Dialogue is a collective of concerned citizens finding concord and consensus in their quest for a better life for under-privileged, under-resourced children in Bangalore. The agenda is: *How to Nurture and Resource the Children of Bangalore for a Self-Sustaining Life for the Next Fifteen Years.*

The Creative Dialogue aims for an elemental kind of solution-finding. Everything has to change from the bottom, at a fundamental level. The putting together of partners means that every group puts its domain knowledge to work, be it in health, education, leadership, or data collection and analysis. "This is validation that thirteen to fourteen organisations can come together and work towards a common goal – to help the children of Bangalore," says Ashok Kamath, Chairman, Akshara Foundation.

Together We Can, an Akshara-civil society partnership for working change in the education system, came about as a natural consequence of the Creative Dialogue, and the Sunday Camps for children began as a multidimensional approach to problem-solving. The Sunday Camps worked on the principle of partnering with the community and with like-minded organisations for a shared purpose and a common, convincing goal.

The first Sunday Camp in the Ambedkar Nagar slum was a meaningful outreach, one that the Creative Dialogue has made its distinctive feature. The partnership plans to hold more camps in slums for the nourishment, wellness and sustenance of children and communities.

In one and a half years there is much that the Creative Dialogue has achieved. More will be done as the weeks and months and years go by. Children in Bangalore's slums look for a way forward to a better life, and the Creative Dialogue hopes to provide them with a grid for their future.

THE RESULTS OF **PARTNERSHIP**



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People usually gather for political functions and village festivals.

But today for the first time in my life I have seen people gathered for the purpose of education. I have seen camps in urban places, but I have not witnessed such an innovative Children's Camp before, with a focus on community awareness.”

SANGAPPA GOREBAL, retired teacher from Bodur, Kushtagi Block, and a donor to a Children's Camp

CHILDREN'S CAMPS

The Children's Camps of 2013-2014 were a huge success, underlining the end result of partnership. It is Akshara's hope that people will take ownership of the events, the community will partner with education in villages, and that the 14,700 participating children will become more academically-oriented and better placed for a future.

Akshara's Children's Camps were conducted for the first time in 2013-2014 during the summer holidays in May and the Dussehra-Ramzan break in October. These Camps took place in villages in Kushtagi, Mundargi, Devanahalli and Hoskote Blocks

Akshara conducted 69 Children's Camps in villages, in which 4052 children participated. These were one-of-a-kind education events in the villages. The camps brought hope and awareness to communities, something to look forward to, to learn from and act on.

The objectives of the Children's Camps were many: To sustain children's interest in learning during holiday time when school routines are absent; provide them with learning opportunities and a space to explore their talents; make parents aware of their children's learning; stimulate communities to participate in education; raise a committed cadre of education volunteers – a youth force – and train them to tackle the primary education system and groom children to be literate and aware.

The Children's Camps, spread over three days at each venue, were multipurpose, inclusive events, and enriching for children and adults. People from all walks congregated – farmers, fruit-sellers, traders, housewives, local leaders, Gram Panchayat representatives, school HMs, teachers and School Development Monitoring Committees, professionals and education officials.

There was learning, fun and entertainment. There were community meetings and discussions, illuminating talks, talent shows and theatre by children, music and dance. Every activity had a pointed, loaded message – education. The skits children put up under the guidance of Akshara's teams were about the triumph of the educated child, the plight of the uneducated misfit, or the ill-treatment and discrimination of the girl child. They were poignant moments that brought tears to the eyes of mothers. Or they said, astonished, "We never knew our children were so talented."

The Children's Camps had an exclusive composition of learning activities, a blend of the serious and the light-hearted. They were stimulating, knowledge-building and competitive, keeping children enthusiastic and engaged. The quizzes in General Knowledge and Mathematics had teams competing fiercely. The ASER (Annual Status of Education

Report) test in Kannada, English and Mathematics determined children's learning levels. The results, announced at evening meetings, roused widespread debate and discussion. Model construction with LEGO play material was an exercise in imagination and elementary engineering.

The camps were unique partnerships. All 69 of them were conducted with the help of the community. Nearly 90% of the cost of running the camps came from the people. Everyone extended a friendly, partnering hand. The Forest Department and private nurseries gave saplings free of cost for the tree-planting drives by children at many camps. Lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, police officers attended, or came as guest speakers and motivators, energising children and activating people. The local media devoted profuse column space to the camps and brought little villages out of obscurity and into the light. Saranappa Vodigeri, the famous folk singer, sang at a Children's Camp – effective, awareness-generating songs on education for an emerging generation.

The 359 education volunteers, trained by Akshara to facilitate the camps, were village youth who expected no monetary returns, just the meaning and purpose that participation gave. Ananda, 17, is an artist who illustrates lesson plans for teachers, but leads a life of extreme poverty. He was an active volunteer who bought tea and snacks for the whole camp on all three days and gave unstintingly of his time. "I am ready to invest my time and money for any educational effort in my village. Akshara Foundation has given me an opportunity to be a part of this educational programme. I am all for this."

Akshatha Jigeri, class 8: "I was just studying without any goal, but the doctor (a guest speaker at the camp) made me dream and told me how to reach my goal." Chandru: "I knew where I stood when I underwent the ASER test. It has helped me learn from my mistakes and inspired me to study more."





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The Makkala Habba is truly a festival.

A festival of fun, learning, skill building and bonding with teachers and parents. It was wonderful to see the enthusiasm of children and the interest they showed in developing models. They participated very well in groups and the final output was quite incredible. Thrilled to be a part of this.”

AKASH KAMISSETTY of Robert Bosch Engineering and Business Solutions Limited

VOLUNTEERING

TCS W10K RUN 2013

May 2013: Akshara participated in the TCS W10K Run 2013 to promote the importance of pre-school education in Government *anganwadis*. 69 supporters, young and old, armed with running bibs and placards blazed the run route in our bright red T-shirts which talked about pre-school education. With the help of our Corporate Partner, Analog Devices India, and various individuals who signed up to raise funds for us and other who donated to the cause, we raised ₹ 6.6 lakhs through the event.

STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics

August 2013 – March 2014: Akshara Foundation, in partnership with the LEGO Foundation, Denmark has set up a Robotics Lab in GTeHPS Viveknagar. The primary focus of the lab is to enable children to learn concepts related to STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. The lab benefits 200 children from grades 5, 6 and 7 from three schools – GTeHPS Viveknagar, GKLPS Viveknagar and GTLPS Viveknagar. 8 volunteers from Robert Bosch participated in a 13-week Robotics tutoring plan.



KATHE HELU, AATA AADU

September 2013: As a part of the Teacher’s Day and the World Literacy Day celebrations, Akshara organized “Kathe Helu, Aata Aadu” - a combination of story-telling and activity sessions in school libraries. The idea of this event was to advocate reading skills and creativity amongst children. The event was organized in 5 schools and over 320 children between grades 5 and 7 participated in it. 60 volunteers from Target, Robert Bosch and HP conducted different activities like collage, skit along with storytelling sessions.

MAKKALA HABBA

November – December 2013: The “Makkala Habba” is a community festival which aims at bringing the parents, teachers and students together. The Habbas were organized in 9 schools, covering over 3655 children. Over 300 individuals from companies like HP, Robert Bosch, CGI, iGate, Hibu and Target volunteered in the event.

THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT WORKSHOP

February 2014: The musical instrument workshop held at Government Kannada Model Primary School (GKMPS) Hebbal, was a joyous, affirming and an incredibly exciting experience. A brainchild of Seth Mollo of Analog Devices, the workshop saw over 35 volunteers from Analog Devices, Target India, CGI and HP India among others come together to create a musical environment for more than 150 kids. Conducted in such a way as to facilitate student learning and creativity more than just playing an instrument, the workshop was totally inspiring and was the highlight of the week for all the participants.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING PARTNERSHIPS

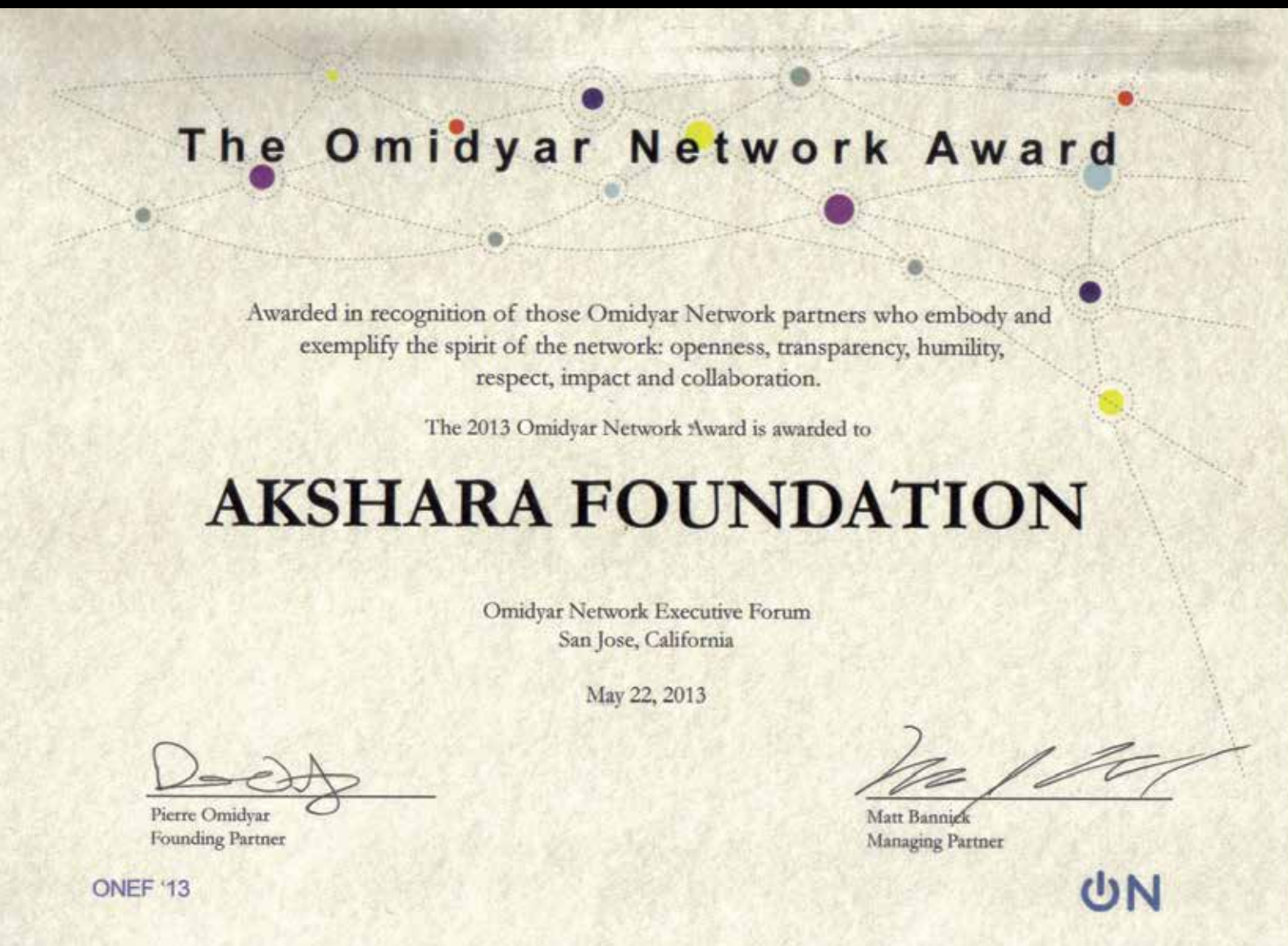


Akshara is a knowledge partner of The Association of People with Disability (APD) and Agastya Foundation, supporting them to set up libraries of their own. Akshara shares its know-how and techniques with them. APD is setting up 17 libraries in schools and the Akshara team helped them select content and procure stickers, book cases and measurement charts. It is a source of gratification for the Library Resource group that it is Akshara's model that Agastya Foundation was most convinced by and decided to choose in their own libraries.

A notable engagement is developing with the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) at whose request a training session was held on child assessments for Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) and Supervisors. NIPCCD is a central government agency tasked with the promotion of voluntary action, research, training and documentation in the overall domain of women's empowerment and child development. One of its regional centres is in Bangalore.

This will acquire wider dimensions as the team will work more closely with NIPCCD to address the CDPOs and Supervisors of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, giving them inputs about Akshara's preschool programme and its child assessment module and taking them to the field to make their learning more complete.

THE OMIDYAR AWARD CELEBRATING PARTNERSHIPS



Akshara Foundation won The Omidyar Network Award for 2013 “in recognition of those Omidyar Network partners who embody and exemplify the spirit of the network: openness, transparency, humility, respect, impact and collaboration,” the citation said. For Akshara, it was a moment of honour and prestige. The award was conferred at the Omidyar Network Executive Forum (ONEF) at San Jose, California, on the 22nd of May 2013. There were four awardees in 2013, with Akshara right on top, having been successfully evaluated against the benchmarks set for the award - the scale criteria of Sharing, Collaborating, Assembling, Leading and Energising.

The citation said, “Over the last year, Akshara has demonstrated leadership, innovation and stewardship in the area of public pre and primary school education in India. Akshara has also created partnerships and networks to create both scale and depth of engagement in the space and drive sustainable change in public education in Karnataka.”



PROGRAMME COVERAGE 2013-14

PREPARE NOT REPAIR



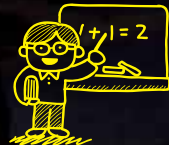
CENTRES

Bangalore Urban **333**
Dharwad **109**
Malur **51** anganawadis



CHILDREN

Bangalore **12,298**
Dharwad **2973**
Malur **1000**



478
TEACHERS

SWALPA ENGLISH THUMBA FUN



39163
CHILDREN

Hoskote **8260**
Devanahalli **1455**
Kushtagi **20772**
Mundargi **8676**



4
BLOCKS



SCHOOLS

Hoskote **257**
Devanahalli **47**
Kushtagi **220**
Mundargi **98**



1291
TEACHERS
Trained

LIBRARY PROGRAMME



87
SCHOOLS



12804
CHILDREN



582
TEACHERS

AKSHARA GANITHA



622
SCHOOLS

Kustagi **220**
Mundargi **98**
Hoskote **257**
Devanahalli **47**



1471
TEACHERS
Trained



CHILDREN

Kustagi **26,039**
Mundargi **10,955**
Hoskote **10,399**
Devanahalli **1818**



4
BLOCKS

KARNATAKA LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Block and Cluster reports to
education department officials



203 BLOCKS
34 DISTRICTS
4056 CLUSTERS

Number of institutions captured
on KLP platform



17,243
PRE/PRIMARY SCHOOLS
12,377
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Community feedback to KLP



42,922
household visits made
6000 captured

Constituency reports to elected
representatives



254 MLAs
28 MPs

Number of children in KLP



809,048
PRE/PRIMARY STUDENTS
824,993
SECONDARY STUDENTS



Number of stories
captured in KLP
14,497 STORIES
and PICTURES

Identity

Akshara Foundation is registered under the Indian Registration Act on March 2, 2000 (Registration No. 335/1999-2000). The Trust Deed is available on request.

Akshara Foundation is registered under Section 12A of the Income Tax Act, 1961. The 80G Certificate is renewed under Number DIT (E) 80G(R)/96/AAATA4879R/X-445/2011-12 dated June 23, 2011.

Akshara Foundation is registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulations) Act, 1976. Registration No.094420987 dated October 3,2002 to receive foreign contributions.

Governance

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Is ultimately responsible for strategy, policy, budget and results.
- Approves audited financial statements and ensures the organization's compliance with laws and regulations
- Examines the strategic long term plan and the individual annual plans and budgets and reviews the progress of the plan throughout the year
- Sees to it that the activities of the organization are aimed at realizing the target and contribute to its mission

10 SUNDAY BEST SUNDAY TIMES OF INDIA, BANGALORE MAY 11, 2014

DESIGN INFORMS EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. THIS COLUMN AIMS TO CAPTURE THE CHANGING AND EXCITING FACE OF INDIAN DESIGN

How to add fun and multiply learning

Akshara Foundation's maths and English kits are being used by hundreds of government schools in Karnataka

Shekhar Singh | 10A

Akshara Foundation's maths and English kits are a great example of how design can enhance and multiply education.

Placed in a big blue box, the math kit is a lot of colours and textures. When fully laid out, the contents of the box could tempt even an adult mathematician to give fractions another look, and one can only imagine the effect it must have on children as they handle the brightly coloured counters, beads, thin plastic connecting cubes, an abacus and the world's prettiest weighing scale. These kits are part of the Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) designed by Akshara that the organization has shared with hundreds of government schools in Karnataka.

The kits are distributed to children of classes 1 to 5, and are meant to supplement their English and maths learning. While the English material is well-designed, neat and attractive – including a variety of charts, posters, books and practice books for students – it's the maths stuff that really takes the breath away. The material is designed to help children get their heads right when it comes to maths – not just understand how to do additions or divisions or multiplication but why they are. None is a cartoon only. "When you solve sums using your own paper, you know the process but you don't always understand the process. Working with this kind of material where you can visualize things really helps in understanding. Maths can be very abstract," says Education Supervisor, managing trustee of Akshara Foundation and the main force behind this project, who has spent 10 months each step of its design and implementation.

One of the main components of the kit is a set of tiny plastic cubes that represent one unit and which multiply 1 gram, going up to the scale. These small cubes are joined together to form a set of ten cubes, then a flat plate with a 100, and then a large cube with a 1000. These help children understand the concept of base 10 understanding. They can also be used to perform various experiments. For instance, Kashi's assistant Kishore shows us how the smallest yellow cubes that weigh one gram can be used to weigh liquid using a weighing scale and a beaker of water.

Another set of interesting aids are various sets of counters made of EVA – a foam like substance (think of the material used to make mouse pads for your computer). This material is tough, can't be snapped into two and is available in a variety of colours. The Akshara kit uses this material extensively, in the form of various geometric shapes, as a set with numbered cards and hundred thousands, and as a set of fractions. The interesting thing about this material is it can be light, is used with water and made to stick on a black or white-board, which makes it easy for teachers to stick them on to the board, leave them around to demonstrate place values in real-time, or show how fractions really work.

The set also follows a certain colour code – the same colours are used to represent units, tens, hundreds and thousands in every component of the kit. "We wanted to ensure that the kids could see the concept clearly. If there are two different items that are available in different forms, that we have put the best ideas we could find together in a way that would be easy for the children to handle and learn from," she says.

Akshara's interest in creating these kits started three years ago at a government school in Hosur, where the organization was involved with through its library programme. "The real test of the concept was not getting through to the children," says Shastri. Today, Akshara's TLM kits are used at 60 schools in Hosur, Kumbhari, Mandagi and Devanahalli taluqs. And the Karnataka government has chosen Akshara to expand the usage in many other schools in the state – it even found a mention in the 2014 state budget. People at Akshara, including Shastri, are hoping their kits will soon be a part of the teaching tools of many more thousands of children from Karnataka.

COLOR CODE: Akshara's math kit, right: Managing Trustee Kashi Shastri

ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿ ಕಲಿಕೆಗೆ ಪೂರಕ

ಕುಳ್ಳಿ ಶಾಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ನಡೆಯಿತು. ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವಾಗಿದೆ. ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕುಳ್ಳಿ ಶಾಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ನಡೆಯಿತು. ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಗುಣಮಟ್ಟ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ: ಚಿರಂಜೀವಿ ಸಿಂಗ್

ಕುಳ್ಳಿ ಶಾಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ನಡೆಯಿತು. ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಕುಳ್ಳಿ ಶಾಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ನಡೆಯಿತು. ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಪತ್ಯೇತರ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವಾಗಿದೆ.

MANIFESTO

RAISE SPENDING ON EDUCATION

India must meet the globally accepted norm of spending at least 6% of GDP on education rather than the roughly 4% being spent currently. This is essential if the shocking dropout rate of about 50% by class 10 is to be brought down, and the gross enrolment ratio in higher education raised beyond the current 16-17%. The enhanced outlay should go towards ensuring decent salaries for teachers also.

Link spending to key outcomes

Simply raising spending on education will not yield desired results unless it's tied to key educational outcomes targeted at increased levels of learning. Improving the quality of education at the middle school level (classes 4 to 6) can be a step forward towards curbing the dropout rate by class 10. An education model based on shared responsibility and accountability can aid more efficient allocation of funds.

Ashok Kumeth |
CHAIRMAN, AKSHARA FOUNDATION

Details of Board of Trustees

Name and Position on Board	Sex	Occupation and Organisation/ Company/ Government	Number of Meetings attended
Mr.Ashok Kamath <i>Chairman</i>	Male	Director, Point Cross.com Private Limited Trustee - Pratham Books	3/3
Mrs. Kanchan Bannerjee <i>Managing Trustee</i>	Female	Trustee - Pratham Books	3/3
Mr.R.Dhirendra <i>Trustee</i>	Male	CEO, Eduquity Career Technologies Pvt.Ltd.	2/3
Commissioner, BBMP,IAS <i>Trustee – Ex -officio</i>	Male	N.A.	1/3 (Represented by Educational Officer)
Mrs. Rekha Menon <i>Trustee</i>	Female	Managing Director, Human Resources for Growth Markets (Asia Pacific, Middle East, Africa and Latin America), Accenture Trustee - Pratham Books	1/3
Ms. Suzanne Singh <i>Trustee</i>	Female	Chairperson, Pratham Books Board Member - United Way Bangalore	3/3
Mr. Mohandas Pai <i>Trustee</i>	Male	Chairman, Manipal Global Education Services Pvt Ltd. Trustee - Akshaya Patra Foundation	1/3

The Akshara Board of Trustees met 3 times in the FY 13-14 on 1st Aug, 2013; 30th Sept, 2013 and 31st Jan, 2014. Minutes of the Board are documented and circulated.

NOTES ON BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- None of the Board members are related to each other
- A Board rotation policy exists and is practiced
- There was no remuneration paid during the year to any of the Board members.

Advisory Board

Akshara’s Advisory Board assists the Board of Trustees by providing insight, advice, and support relative to programmes, curriculum, and development and fundraising endeavors while providing links to the various stakeholder communities.

1. Mr. Ashok Kamath, *Chairman*
2. Mrs. Kanchan Bannerjee, *Managing Trustee*
3. Mrs. Suzanne Singh
4. Ms. Tara Kini
5. Mr. V. Ravichander
6. Dr. R.G. Nadadur
7. Ms. Usha Abrol
8. Mr. Gautham Pai

Distribution of Staff according to Compensation Levels as on March 31, 2014

Slab of gross monthly remuneration paid (in ₹) both full time and part time	Female	Male	Total
Less than ₹ 5,000	-	-	-
₹ 5,000 - ₹ 9,999	8	27	35
₹ 10,000 - ₹ 24,999	10	9	19
₹ 25,000 - ₹ 49,999	8	7	15
₹ 50,000 & above	4	5	9
Total	30	48	78

The compensation of the highest paid staff member is ₹ 1,11,000 and that of the lowest paid staff member is ₹ 7000.

TRAVEL



- Total cost of international travel by all staff during the year was ₹ 1,13,853.
- No Board Member has been paid or reimbursed any amount for their international travel.
- Total cost of national travel by all staff during the year was ₹ 4, 57,433. Out of this, the expenditure for the Chairman is ₹ 45,193; for the Managing Trustee is ₹ 2,572 and on other personnel is ₹ 4,09,668.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The following financial statements provide an overview of revenue, expenses and sources of Akshara Foundation funding for the financial year 2013-14.



RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

(Amount in Rupees)			
Receipts	Sch No.	For the Year ended March 31, 2014	For the Year ended March 31, 2013
Balance brought forward			
- Cash on Hand		21,885	18,390
- Cash at Bank		48,28,577	38,91,175
Fixed Deposit		160,00,000	145,41,019
Donations Received - General	16	31,84,074	104,50,585
Donations Received for Dharwad		-	-
Donations Received in advance		68,44,076	54,60,216
Miscellaneous Income	17	15,20,951	46,03,181
Programme receipts			
Preschool Programmes	18	6,53,961	33,78,400
Inschool Programmes	19	82,47,279	95,62,700
Library Programmes	20	22,63,125	29,19,850
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programmes	21	174,05,406	74,83,915
ASER Survey Programme:Research Evaluation & Consultancy		-	-
Inter branch Transfers		35,120	6,97,497
Proffesional Tax Collected During the Year		1,550	-
TDS Collected During the Year		19,83,434	-
Total		629,89,438	630,06,928



RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

(Amount in Rupees)			
Payments	Sch No.	For the Period ended Mar 31, 2014	For the Period ended Mar 31, 2013
Administrative Expenses	22	18,03,617	143,43,994
Donor relation Expenses		11,90,883	-
Programme payments			
Preschool Programmes	23	36,04,375	1,72,241
Inschool Programmes	24	115,68,179	7,45,705
Library Programmes	25	32,92,750	3,25,961
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programmes	26	144,28,722	2,48,389
ASER Survey Programme:Research Evaluation & Consultancy		-	21,27,329
Payment to Creditors	28	9,06,564	
Fixed Assets Purchased	7	9,64,238	
Purchase of Stock Kits	31	3,18,499	
TDS Paid during the period		16,69,542	8,65,260
Advance Paid		-	88,77,153
Other Deposit made			95,000
Inter Branch Account	29	(6,27,922)	136,57,427
Inter Branch Transfers	30	35,120	-
Paid to Akshara Foundation, N. Karnataka	27	6,75,238	6,98,009
Balance carried forward			
- Cash on Hand		12,210	21,883
- Cash at Bank		48,03,424	48,28,577
Fixed Deposit		183,44,000	160,00,000
Total		629,89,439	630,06,928
Significant accounting policies and notes thereon	32		
for Akshara Foundation			
As per our Audit Report of even date			
for Singhvi, Dev & Unni			
Chartered Accountants			
Firm Reg. No. 003867S			
S Ranganath			
Partner			
Membership No.201191			
Bangalore			
September 25, 2014			



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

(Amount in Rupees)			
Particulars	Sch No.	For the Year ended March 31, 2014	For the Year ended March 31, 2013
Income:			
Donations Received	12	37,40,644	86,86,741
Miscellaneous Income	13	16,92,947	17,97,029
Sub Total A		54,33,591	104,83,770
Programme & other income received:			
Preschool Programmes	1	11,87,761	55,81,911
Inschool Programmes	2	124,52,880	138,76,850
Library Programmes	3	31,63,125	36,84,850
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	4	174,05,406	54,23,915
Research Evaluation & Consultancy	5	-	-
Sub Total B		342,09,172	285,67,526
Total (A+B)		396,42,763	390,51,296
Expenditure:			
Administrative expenses	14	18,88,161	26,05,635
Donor relation Expenses	15	11,90,883	9,92,039
Depreciation	7	4,29,650	1,48,288
Sub Total C		35,08,693	37,45,962
Programme expenses:			
Preschool Programmes	1	36,28,420	70,01,224
Inschool Programmes	2	115,74,415	135,36,705
Library Programmes	3	51,09,154	51,90,813
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	4	142,71,389	80,91,153
Research Evaluation & Consultancy	5	5,117	98,785
Sub Total D		345,88,495	339,18,680
Total (C+D)		380,97,188	376,64,642



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

(Amount in Rupees)			
Particulars	Sch No.	For the Year ended March 31, 2014	For the Year ended March 31, 2013
Excess of Income over expenditure/ (Expenditure over income) for the year		15,45,574	13,86,654
Add:			
Opening balance in funds			
Opening balance in Corpus fund		114,46,355	74,39,360
Preschool Programmes	1	11,28,279	25,47,591
Inschool Programmes	2	4,25,152	85,006
Library Programmes	3	-	-
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	4	46,96,780	61,94,768
Research Evaluation & Consultancy	5	5,117	48,302
Total		192,47,257	177,01,681
Appropriated to			
Preschool Programmes	1	13,12,380	-
Inschool Programmes	2	8,19,342	-
Library Programmes	3	19,67,893	15,05,963
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	4	95,943	73,64,018
Research Evaluation & Consultancy	5	-	55,600
Transferred from			
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme		-	61,94,768
Excess of Income over expenditure /(expenditure over income) after appropriation			
Corpus funds		91,75,695	114,46,354
Preschool Programmes	1	-	11,28,278
Inschool Programmes	2	21,22,959	4,25,152
Library Programmes	3	21,864	-
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	4	79,26,740	108,91,548
Research Evaluation & Consultancy	5	-	5,117
Excess of Income over expenditure /(expenditure over income) after appropriation		192,47,257	238,96,449
Significant accounting policies and notes thereon	32		
for Akshara Foundation			
Ashok R Kamath			
Chairperson			
Bangalore			
September 25, 2014			
Ms.Kanchan Bannerjee			
Managing Trustee			
Bangalore			
September 25, 2014			
As per our Audit Report of even date for Singhvi, Dev & Unni Chartered Accountants Firm Reg. No. 003867S			
S Ranganath			
Partner			
Membership No.201191			
Bangalore			
September 25, 2014			



BALANCE SHEET

(Amount in Rupees)

Particulars	as at March 31, 2014	as at March 31, 2013
Corpus Fund	91,75,695	114,46,354
General & project appropriations:		
Preschool Programmes	-	11,28,278
Inschool Programmes	21,22,959	4,25,151
Library Programmes	21,864	
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programmes	79,26,740	46,96,780
Research Evaluation & Consultancy	-	5,117
Current Liabilities	75,20,264	74,38,333
Total	267,67,522	251,40,013
Fixed assets	13,97,354	10,10,351
Funded Fixed Assets	4,35,494	21,24,848
Deposits	5,75,000	6,25,219
Other Current Assets	12,00,040	5,29,133
Cash and Bank Balances	231,59,634	208,50,462
Total	267,67,522	251,40,013

Significant accounting policies and notes thereon

for Akshara Foundation


Ashok R Kamath
Chairperson

Bangalore
September 25, 2014


Ms. Kanchan Bannerjee
Managing Trustee



As per our Audit Report of even date
for Singhvi, Dev & Unni
Chartered Accountants
Firm Reg. No. 003867S


S Ranganath
Partner
Membership No. 201191
Bangalore
September 25, 2014



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

Our partners are the cornerstone of Akshara Foundation. Without them we can't ensure *Every Child in School and Learning Well*. They are foundations, organisations, individuals, local communities, parents, government officials, teachers, non-profits, photographers, bloggers and everyday people just like you. In our mission to universalize quality primary education, they share their talents and resources. Together they share our vision and help make it a reality. We apologise if you are not listed by name and want each of you to know that everything we receive is truly appreciated.

CORPORATES

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Analog Devices India
Anuradha Foundation
Bangalore Cares Trust
CGI
Charities Aid Foundation, America
Charities Aid Foundation, India
Cisco Systems Inc
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Dell International Services
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India Cares Foundation
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INDIVIDUALS


Mr. Aadisht Khanna
Mr. A C Sridharha
Ms. Anita Kunnenkeril John
Ms. Angeline Pradhan
Ms. Anjali Ramachandran
Mr. Arun Pai
Ms. Asha Sharath
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