



# VIDYA

" Every child in school and Learning well "

PRATHAM MYSORE  
NEWSLETTER  
MARCH 2008 ISSUE 1

## EDITORIAL: THE LAUNCH EDITION

Pratham Mysore will soon be six years old by June 2008 and growing stronger by the day. From humble beginnings with a single Balawadi of 20 children in Nachanahalli Palya, a under-privileged area in Mysore, Pratham has now spread to 14 slum locations reaching out to thousands of poor children. Trained staff and volunteers at Pratham deliver services through Balawadis (nurseries) that prepare pre-school children for a period of one to two years for admissions into formal government schooling. Out of school children who have missed out on schooling for various reasons are brought back into the system through remedial programmes for slow-learners, as well as bridge courses for the older children through accelerated learning techniques. This is further supported by operating mobile libraries, distributing books to children's homes to sustain their reading habit and interest. You can read about our various programmes in this launch edition of our newsletter, and you will find more detailed coverage at our website [www.prathammysore.org](http://www.prathammysore.org).

Pratham Mysore is what it is today only because of the untiring efforts of innumerable volunteers, philanthropists, corporates, the State Dept. of Education, and a very committed Pratham Mysore staff. The launch of the bi-annual Pratham Mysore newsletter is meant to update all stakeholders of its work and initiatives and further strengthen partnerships, share experiences with the sole aim of increasing awareness through education. It is also our hope that the newsletter will become a vehicle for reaching new audiences, sponsors and volunteers. We trust that you will find this first edition of Pratham Mysore newsletter illuminating, informative and engaging. We welcome your comments and suggestions to help us with our efforts to ensure that every child is in school and learning well. As a final note, I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution towards producing this first newsletter made by one of our UK volunteers, Mr. Rakesh Amin. Mr. Ashwini Ranjan, Managing Trustee, Pratham Mysore.



## Introducing PRATHAM MYSORE – the story thus far .....



Balawadi - "Making school going into a habit"

Pratham is a community based grass-roots organisation that promotes the education of underprivileged children in India. Initiated by UNICEF in 1994 with 2,000 children in Mumbai, Pratham now serves more than 300,000 children directly and more than 5 million through various catalytic programmes.

Driven by our mission statement, "Every Child in School and Learning Well" and by building effective working partnerships with the community, statutory bodies and the private sector, Pratham Mysore has successfully delivered programmes of education at pre-school and primary levels to around 15,000 poor children in Mysore and surrounding districts.

A few years on from its inception, Pratham Mysore has established credibility within the regional education sector, so much so that state schools have incorporated some of Pratham's teaching models into their mainstream curriculum and regularly allow Pratham's partnership on various education initiatives in the region.

### Programmes

The Balawadi programme delivers pre-school education, with the aim of familiarizing children with schooling so that school-going becomes a habit.

Young women from the local community are recruited and trained by Pratham Mysore to act as teachers for children aged 3-5½ years old for 2-3 hours per day. Set up in easily accessible classrooms within the local community or in a school-setting, the children are taught in a way that they enjoy the experience of learning whilst mixing and playing with other children. To date 115 Balawadi centres have been established by Pratham Mysore.

#### Balaskhi:

The Balaskhi (a word meaning "child's friend") programme helps children who are identified as lagging behind academically within the state school system, with a view to improving learning levels and reducing school dropout rates.

The programme targets children in standards 2-7 with Pratham Mysore training local women to work as Balaskhis either with school teachers in state schools or in community centres for a period of 2-3 hrs a day.

Currently there are 83 remedial maths and 26 remedial Kannada language schemes operating as part of this programme.

#### Library Programme:

Launched in June 2005 with 5 librarians operating mobile libraries in the Gousianagar slums, this programme has now grown to involving 96 trained librarians working in community centres, state schools, and even within individual children's homes across the city of Mysore. Poor children are provided with access to



Balaskhi - "Helping each child to reach their potential"

books so as to facilitate their learning and sustain their interest in reading. To date, the programme reaches out to over 5000 children every year.

Pratham Mysore also operates the following:

- ☐☐ Kannada Reading programme with Govt partnership
- ☐☐☐ Summer camps for poor children
- ☐☐☐ Women empowerment progs. & self-help groups
- ☐☐☐ Supervisory education committees involving local community/opinion leaders
- ☐☐ Outreach programmes working with child labourers and street children
- ☐☐☐ Computer education centres for children and young women living in poor areas of the city

**For more details on all Pratham Mysore's programmes and activities, please visit [www.prathammysore.org](http://www.prathammysore.org).**

## Calling out to Mysore's Youth



Young volunteers helping to fundraise

It is the case that the fortunes of India are changing at some pace and that our youth, that is, our "highly educated youth", are increasingly calling the shots in the global marketplace. And yet, there remains the all too familiar scene of street-children with rags for clothes and fading dreams in their eyes, working and/or begging on our street corners – nothing has changed for these children numbering in their millions. We at Pratham Mysore have always had the firm belief that the principal agents that will change this latter desper-

ate landscape are today's excelling Indian youth, who with their energy, knowledge and resources will help to pull up others who are less privileged and who have not benefited from high quality comprehensive education.

With this in mind, over the last few months Pratham Mysore has made a concerted effort to call out to the youth in Mysore to join in with the organisation's activities. And to this end we have had a measure of success with local young professionals acting as mentors and educators (particularly in relation to our computer courses), and university students helping us with the comprehensive regional state education survey, ASER, by interviewing families, and collating and assisting in the analysis of data. Local youth also provide their expertise, time and energy to our annual summer camp programmes and to our fundraising activities.

**If you are interested in volunteering, please see the back page for details.**

## Newsround

### Partnership with the Corporate Sector

Jan 11, 2008 was an important day for Pratham Mysore as it marked the beginning of the involvement of the corporate sector in Pratham's work. On this date, Software Paradigm (SPi), a Mysore based software company, joined hands with Pratham Mysore as true partners working towards the mission of "Every child in school and learning well". SPi has provided financial support to facilitate the work of Pratham - eg. SPi has contributed to a project aimed at extending the successful "Balawadi" formula to state pre-school centres (Anganwadis). To date this public-private partnership initiative has enabled the "Balawadi" model to be incorporated into these Government Anganwadis operating in 17 rural and 19 urban slum areas to the benefit of over 1,000 children. Last month, SPi staff also helped Pratham Mysore to launch the "True Education" initiative, an extra-curricular programme aimed at educating children in poor areas on issues outside standard class textbooks. A 'children's question bank' has been created on subjects such as the universe, wildlife, history of Mysore, etc., and SPi volunteers offer their time during Saturday afternoon sessions to answer questions from the 'bank'.



SPi volunteers at a "True Education" class

### Making Maths Fun: NNG package

Nagunagutha Ganitha (NNG) is a remedial package designed to enable children to learn basic mathematical skills through play and their own creativity. Since June 2007, this package has been piloted in the state school sector, where Pratham Mysore have provided guidance and training to state school teachers to assist in teaching maths to standard 2-5 children.

Developed by Dr. T. Padmini, Pratham Trustee and Emeritus Prof. at the Univ. of Mysore, this remedial programme marks a significant shift from conventional teaching methods towards a child-led model of learning which focuses on fostering thinking strategies among children so that they explore different ways of arriving at mathematical solutions. The model is easily reproducible using simple tools like counting boards and number grids in an activity-driven approach to learning.

The pilot in the state school sector concluded in February 2008 with 1568 children (from standards 2-5) in 54 govt schools having gone through the programme, and the feedback from state school teachers has been very positive thus far.

Following a full evaluation of the pilot, the second phase will aim to roll out the programme across all state schools.

### In Brief .....

**New Training Assignment:** In Jan 2008 the State Dept. of Women and Child Welfare assigned the task of a Training of Trainers to Pratham Mysore. The contract is for ICDS functionaries involved in training Balavikas Samithi members tasked with managing pre-school centres in the districts of Mysore, Mandya, Hassan and Chikamagalur.

**Gifted Children:** In partnership with Vidya Poshak, a Dharwad-based NGO, Pratham Mysore is involved in a city-wide initiative that aims to provide financial support to gifted students from poor backgrounds seeking to enter higher education. The project commenced in Feb 08.

**ASER 2007** - Pratham Mysore participated in ASER for the third consecutive year during Oct-Nov 2007. ASER, a nationwide sample survey seeking to assess the status of education in the country, involves 20,000 volunteers who visit children's homes and administer a simple test (covering reading, comprehension and arithmetic levels) in the presence of family members. The survey was coordinated, implemented and monitored through Pratham Mysore in the southern part of Karnataka.

### The findings of ASER – 2007 in Mysore District:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| □ 74% children (Age 3-4) in Anganwadi or other Pre-school             | □ 82% children (std 1-2) recognize numbers (1-9) or more        |
| □ 97% children (Age 6-14) enrolled in school                          | □ 40% children (std 3-5) can Read Std 1 text or more in Kannada |
| □ 12.4% children (Age 6-14) attend private school                     | □ 35% children (std 3-5) can subtract or do more                |
| □ 74.4% children (std 1-2) can read letters, words or more in Kannada | □ 2.9% children (std 3-5) can Read Sentences in English.        |

## STAR OF THE EDITION

Book worm extraordinaire - a shining example

We at Pratham Mysore always had high hopes for our library programme reaching out to children in poor communities and really facilitating and stimulating their learning. But none of us imagined for one moment that we would give rise to a phenomenon we know as "Abdul Rahim". Abdul is a 12 year old seventh standard student in Srikanteshwara Vidya Samstha, who has become an "active" member of the Pratham library facility at the Gulzar Fathima centre in Shanthinagar. "Active" is may be an understatement given that Abdul reads almost 1,000 books every year!!! Moreover, Abdul participates in the entire spectrum of Pratham's library special programmes, encouraging his peers to read more regularly and extensively, and even bringing the gift of story-telling to the family home by narrating stories in Kannada to his parents. Recently, Abdul undertook a roleplay based on Pratham's library books in his school's cultural programme and won first prize for his performance.

We are sure you will all agree that Abdul is a worthy "Star of the Edition" winner of this launch issue.



Abdul Rahim - Star of the Edition



"Help Pratham Mysore to continue to help children"

You can support Pratham Mysore financially by making a donation and sponsoring children / centres, or by giving your time as a volunteer helping with administration work, fundraising, preparing teaching aids or by actually assisting in the delivery of teaching.

Sponsoring options :

Sponsor a Balawadi – Rs 1000 per month  
Sponsor a Balasakhi – Rs 1250 per month  
Sponsor a Library – Rs 1250 per month  
Sponsor 100 children – Rs 3000 per month  
Sponsor 25 children – Rs 750 per month  
Sponsor 10 children – Rs 300 per month

All donations by cheque to be made in favour of 'Pratham Mysore' and should be sent to the contact address below.

(All donations made to PRATHAM MYSORE are exempt from taxes U/s 80G of the I.T.Act 1961, and are registered under FCRA Regulations Act).

Volunteering :

We value any time you can offer to Pratham Mysore as a volunteer. If you want to find out more about volunteering, please contact Mr. Sheshadri at the address below.

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