Background
The Centre For Learning Resources (CLR) was established in Pune in 1984. It is a non-profit educational institution of The Society For Educational Improvement and Innovation which is registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860, the Bombay Public Trust Act of 1950 and the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act of 1976.

Goals
The expansion of elementary education and early childhood education in India has often not been matched by a similar concern for the quality of teaching and learning. This has resulted in dreary and unstimulating classrooms, millions of elementary school dropouts and unacceptably low levels of learning in our classrooms. The main goal of the CLR is to improve the quality of early childhood care and development and elementary education that rural and urban disadvantaged children receive in our country.

Main Activities
The CLR acts as a technical support organisation to NGOs working at the grassroots level, and to government and private schools. It works primarily with teachers, teacher-trainers, and others involved in the education of economically and socially disadvantaged children at the pre-primary and elementary stages of education, including alternative education. It also works with trainers and field workers involved in the care and development of children in the birth to 3 years age group.

The main activities of the CLR include:
- Inservice training of elementary school teachers, instructors in alternative education centres and support classes, and balwadi/anganwadi workers in early childhood education (ECE) programmes.
- Inservice training of teacher trainers and supervisory personnel for early childhood and elementary education.
- Training of personnel in early childhood development programmes which target caregivers of children in the birth to 3 years age group.
- Development of training materials.
- Development of instructional materials in various curricular areas, with an emphasis on functional literacy and numeracy, including audio-visual materials for environmental education, language development, and English as a second language.
- Advocacy – including exhibitions for public awareness.
- Consultancy in curriculum development, educational project design, academic and other research inputs to schools, NGOs and government agencies, funding organisations and international bodies.
Elementary Education

Helping Vulnerable Children Cope with School

Enrollment in primary schools has been rapidly increasing over the past few years. However, the quality of education in most government schools leaves much to be desired. Several NGOs have been endeavouring to provide educational support outside schools to school-going children. Drawing upon its long experience in providing various forms of technical support for quality in elementary education, the CLR has been offering capacity-building programmes to NGOs who run support classes in their efforts to prevent school dropout and enhance learning. In addition, low-cost teaching-learning materials developed by us are also made available to the support class teachers.

Training of Trainers and Support Class Teachers

National Institute of Sustainable Development (NISD) and P.R.I.D.E., India

This year, we conducted a training session in two phases for trainers and support class teachers of two NGOs in Maharashtra, namely NISD and P.R.I.D.E. India.

P.R.I.D.E. has been working with primary schools and runs balwadis, study centres for school-going children, and health care programmes in over 150 villages in Mahad taluka of Raigad District and Sastur in Osmanabad District. P.R.I.D.E. requested training inputs to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in their existing support classes.

NISD works in 15 villages in Sangamner taluka of Ahmednagar District, with the families of workers in bidi factories. The NGO runs crèches in several villages and also conducts awareness-raising activities related to environment, health and child labour. For NISD, the concept of support classes was new. Their village-level workers had all been recently selected and required intensive training.

Pre-project visits made by our staff to the respective project villages of NISD and P.R.I.D.E. helped us to formulate need-based programmes for them. The training sessions held in Pune were centred around the issues of concern in the support classes: lack of adequate learning among children studying in the schools of the project villages, and inadequate teaching skills of the support teachers. These sessions attempted to throw fresh light on the role of the support class teacher, and to give them a sound understanding of the curriculum and activities for teaching language and mathematics in Class 1 and 2.

India Sponsorship Committee (ISC)

ISC is running support classes in Pune slums and in the brick kilns on the outskirts of Pune. As part of our on-going technical support for their educational activities, the CLR conducted monthly training sessions for their support class teachers. This year’s training focussed on mathematics concepts and skills at Class 3 and 4 levels. Teachers were encouraged to find ways of relating mathematics to daily life.
We have been extending technical support to ISC’s educational programmes for the past several years. Initially, we trained teachers for their Non Formal Education (NFE) centres. Then their strategy changed and they began enrolling children in schools, while running support classes for them. Our focus in the training for support class teachers has been on methods and materials for the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy, as requested by the teachers themselves. This year, we undertook the documentation of the evolving ISC programmes and the CLR’s role. The document would serve as a reference for other organisations planning to undertake similar initiatives.

Training of Trainers for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rajasthan

The CLR was requested by SSA Rajasthan and UNICEF, Jaipur to formulate capacity-building inputs for trainers and resource persons involved in curriculum development and teacher-training for the teaching of English in government schools in Rajasthan.

We conducted an intensive 5-day training programme in Pune in January 2007 for a team of 18 persons selected by the SSA office.

The sessions focused on two major aspects, namely:

- The key issues related to the acquisition of English by children in government regional-medium schools.
- The teaching-learning process for English as a Second Language (ESL).

The participants were exposed to methods and materials that could be used to develop integrated skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in English, and the use of audio-visual aids. Difficulties faced by students in the transition from home language to school language, and possible solutions were also discussed. Presentations, brainstorming sessions and group work made the programme interactive.

Feedback from a participant of the training programme

“The methods you suggested to create readiness for learning English will be very useful for us.”

Teaching English in Government Regional Medium Schools Through the CLR Interactive Radio Programme

Teaching Spoken English Through Radio

To improve the spoken English skills of students studying in government regional medium schools, the CLR has developed a 3-year bilingual interactive radio programme in English-Marathi and English-Hindi. Since 2000, this has been broadcast over All India Radio (AIR) to lakhs of elementary school students in Maharashtra and other states.

We are using an innovative pedagogy known as Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI). This allows listeners not only to hear English being spoken, but gives them opportunities during the radio lessons to speak in English. The radio lessons contain a variety of child-friendly formats such as
dramas, songs, stories and language games which hold the interest of upper primary school children. Besides teaching spoken English, they promote appropriate attitudes related to democracy, secularism, gender, health, small family norm, etc.

Testing has indicated significant improvement in the speaking skills of students who have listened to our programme.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Broadcast of the CLR Radio Programme for Spoken English</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Pune District : 2001-ongoing</td>
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<td>- Rajasthan : 2005-06</td>
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Teaching Reading and Writing in English Through Radio

During the implementation of the spoken English radio programme, teachers had expressed an interest in a similar approach for improving reading and writing skills in English. In 2005-06, we developed an integrated radio programme to include basic reading and writing skills for Class 5 students. An integral part of this initiative was the development of a reader-cum-activity book, which was provided to the students of Class 5 studying in government Marathi medium schools in Pune District. This book was developed after detailed monitoring of classroom interactions during an initial pilot project. The pilot helped us to understand that the main focus of the radio lessons had to be on reading skills, and that only some writing skills involving grammar and spelling could be included, in as much as they reinforce fluency in reading.

Monitoring and testing indicated that the students were both enjoying and benefitting from the integrated programme. Hence it was extended this year to Class 6.

Pre-broadcast Activities for Class 6: Second Year of the Radio Programme for Teaching Integrated English Skills

For the listening and speaking skills component of the integrated programme, we already had the Class 6 radio lessons developed by us a few years ago. The Class 6 reader-cum-activity book was published in May 06. A CLR staff team undertook the writing, illustrations and design of the entire book. The book contains lessons based on themes that are of interest to upper primary students, and is attractively illustrated. Fifty-two bilingual radio lessons correlated with the book were scripted, recorded and edited, using our own recording studio facilities. With a few exceptions, this entire process was undertaken by CLR staff.
27,000 copies of the reader-cum-activity book were distributed to 896 Pune Zilla Parishad elementary schools through the respective Block Education Offices. Teachers of Class 6 were given an accompanying guidebook to help plan and facilitate the lessons of the reader-cum-activity book. A series of orientation sessions were held in different talukas of Pune District to familiarise cluster coordinators with the radio programme, and to involve them in monitoring its implementation in schools.

**Broadcasting the Integrated Radio Programme for Class 6**

The broadcasts of the 15-minute radio programme for Class 6, “Let’s Read and Write English”, and “We Learn English” for spoken English, commenced in July 06. In all, 133 radio lessons were broadcast over 30 weeks - 52 for reading and writing twice a week, and 81 lessons for improving listening and speaking skills thrice a week. All Pune Zilla Parishad elementary schools were covered by the broadcasts.

**Classroom Monitoring of the Radio Lessons**

The new lessons broadcast were closely monitored by our staff. Continuous feedback was obtained from the classroom observations as to the comprehension levels of the students and the difficulties they faced while doing the activities. Lessons that had yet to be recorded were suitably modified based on this feedback. Video documentation was also carried out, with footage shot in various schools.

**Impact of the Integrated Radio Programme on English Skills**

A test devised for baseline assessment of English skills of Class 6 students was conducted in July 06. This test included components for listening, speaking, reading and writing, and was administered to 200 randomly selected Class 7 students in 20 schools in Pune District - 10 students from each school - at the beginning of the academic year. The same test was administered at the end of the year to an equal number of Class 6 students from the same schools, who had listened to the Class 6 radio programme.

The comparison of the baseline and post-test scores indicated that:

- The reading scores of students who listened to the reading programme were superior to those who had not heard the programme.
- The listening, speaking and writing scores did not indicate any differences.
As mentioned earlier, the main focus in the new pilot programme “Let’s Read and Write English” is on improving reading skills, as teaching of writing skills has limited potential through radio. Hence it was encouraging to note that our principal objective was achieved. As our Class 6 English curriculum introduces skills which are to be reinforced in the third year, i.e. in Class 7, before they can be expected to be mastered, we believe that the cumulative impact on all 4 skills will only be seen at the end of the third year.

There was, however, a problem in the implementation that we did not anticipate, and that possibly impinges on the results. Feedback from monitoring revealed that many teachers concentrated exclusively on the reading and writing component. They were not as interested in the speaking component and most of them do not understand the influence of oracy on literacy learning. Hence they were not tuning in to the broadcasts for spoken English. This probably explains the lack of progress in students’ listening and speaking scores this year. In the light of this feedback, we will be making appropriate changes in some aspects of the integrated radio lessons.

CLR Radio Programme in SSA-Uttarakhand

Our radio programme in English-Hindi for teaching spoken English was broadcast for the third year in partnership with SBMA-Plan and SSA-Uttarakhand in 2 districts of Uttarakhand - Chamoli and Uttarkashi. We conducted a training session for resource persons at the DIET in Badkot, in Chamoli District of Uttarakhand. We have heard informally that based on the positive response to the radio lessons, SSA-Uttarakhand would like to expand the programme to more districts.

Developing English Skills of Other Learners

Prisoners at Yerawada Jail

The CLR was involved in a unique initiative this year to teach English to inmates of Yerawada Jail in Pune. This request came from Freedom Foundation, an NGO working with prisoners at the jail. We decided to use our existing audio CDs, used by All India Radio (AIR) for broadcasting our radio programme, for this project. After consultations with the jail authorities, 50 undertrials in the age-group 18 to 22 years were selected for the classes.

In collaboration with the jail staff, we selected a prisoner-volunteer to coordinate the project. This volunteer was trained to use the interactive audio lessons for teaching spoken English. The project generated a positive response from the inmates, but there were some problems in reaching the CDs to the learners, arising out of security concerns of the jail authorities. We have tried to resolve these issues, and the first year of the project is in the process of completion.

Young Athletes of the Army Sports Institute

The Army Sports Institute at Ghorpuri in Pune had heard about the CLR radio programme and requested us to help their young trainees learn English. The institute identifies youngsters from all over India excelling in various sports activities. The inherent athletic skills of these children are honed at the Boys Sports Company so that they can successfully compete in various sporting events in India and abroad. It was found that many of these young boys do not possess adequate skills in English, especially spoken English. The army authorities felt that a basic command of spoken English would help not only with the boys’ studies, but would also increase their social skills and overall confidence.

As these young athletes are selected from all over India, the majority are able to communicate in some basic Hindi. Hence we decided to use the audio CDs of our radio programme in English-Hindi (Level 1 and 2) for this project. We oriented a few army instructors on how to use the CDs with their students. The army authorities have been very happy with the impact of the audio lessons on the speaking skills of the students. They would like us to expand this project next year.
Designing a Modular Course for Strengthening English Skills of Teachers in Regional Medium Schools

Almost all states have adopted the policy of teaching English at the primary level in government schools. However, the lack of adequate English skills among teachers is a major hurdle in this process. Besides, the available learning resources are not suited to the requirements of teachers from rural backgrounds. To address this gap, the CLR has conceptualised and is developing a course to enhance the English language skills of teachers.

The course is an extension of our efforts to promote greater effectiveness in teaching English, and integrates listening, speaking, reading and writing, with an additional section on grammar. It has been formulated keeping in mind that many teachers in government schools have a very rudimentary knowledge of English. The themes covered include those that are of specific interest to teachers, such as education, the teaching profession, etc. The accompanying interactive audio CD, detailed instructor's manual and learner's course book support the course and assist teachers to attain basic proficiency in English. The course is planned as follows: 2 weeks inputs, 4 months consolidation through self-study, followed by 2 more weeks of inputs, totalling 120 contact hours.

The first part of the pilot course, totalling 30 hours, was conducted over 6 days. A group of 17 Zilla Parishad teachers from the Lonikand area near Pune were selected to participate in the weekly sessions. All sessions were conducted by our staff and an external resource person. Assessment has indicated a marked improvement in the English skills acquired by the participants during the course. The teachers themselves have expressed satisfaction with the sessions because they feel that, apart from language skills, they have also gained confidence that would enable them to be more effective in imparting English skills to their students.

This course has been envisioned as one that government education departments could implement. We would train the instructors through intensive training programmes (TOTs). The instructors would in turn conduct the course at block or cluster level for teachers.

Developing Bilingual Materials for Language Learning and Recreational Reading

Bilingual Picture Word Books in Various Indian Languages

The CLR published a bilingual picture word book in English-Marathi and English-Hindi last year, entitled “My World~My Words”. This reference book is suitable for school libraries, classroom libraries and for individual children, and is receiving an encouraging response from schools and parents.

Features of the Picture Word Book

- Helps to promote vocabulary development.
- Features about 1000 words based on the every-day world of Indian children.
- Colourful visuals portray the rich diversity of India and enhance the appeal of the book.
This year, we undertook the development of other bilingual editions of this publication. Translations were finalised after in-depth consultations with expert translators in the different Indian languages, and promotional print runs were published in the following languages:

- English-Gujarati
- English-Malayalam
- English-Punjabi
- English-Kannada
- English-Oriya

The Telugu, Tamil, Assamese, Bengali and Urdu versions are under publication.

“My World~My Words” has also been modified so as to provide a smaller and cheaper option for school children.

The CLR has entered into agreements with different publishers for the bilingual editions in English and the following languages: Marathi, Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati, Malayalam and Urdu.

**Bilingual Reading Series in English-Marathi for Beginners**

The CLR’s existing series of booklets for early reading is entitled “Chala Vachuya” in Marathi and “Aao Padhe” in Hindi. This year, the Marathi booklets were translated and brought out in a bilingual format (English-Marathi).

The set consists of 10 child-friendly booklets with the English texts graded for beginners. The Marathi texts in booklets 1 to 6 are graded according to the ‘barakhadi’ sequence, and the Marathi vocabulary throughout the series contains no conjunct letters. The series is attractively illustrated in full colour.
Bilingual Story Books in English-Marathi and English-Hindi

When children are learning to read in a new language, they are usually exposed only to sentences or small instructional texts. But being able to read a whole book in a new language is a special kind of thrill. To spark this excitement, the CLR developed a range of bilingual story books this year.

Our experience in the teaching of English in regional medium schools shows that students feel encouraged to read English when the text in their language of instruction is juxtaposed with the English text.

Three story books were published in English-Marathi and English-Hindi. Beautifully illustrated, with simple graded text, these stories are part of an initial series of 5 books featuring traditional and modern stories for young children.

The Lion And The Mouse
रिह आणि चूहा
शेर और चूहा
A traditional fable about the brave mouse who rescues an angry but helpless lion.

The Princess Who Never Smiled
ज हरसलेली राजकुमारी
राजकुमारी जी कभी नाही हंसी
Who will make the princess smile? Children find out through this traditional story.

Cock-A-Doodle-Doo!
कूक-डूक-डू!
कूक-डूक-डू!
A story that reveals why the cock crows every morning before sunrise.
A Cluster-Level Experiment to Encourage Cooperative Learning in Government Elementary Schools

When local, sub-district level officers of the government school system take the initiative to attempt something new, something meaningful within the schools in their charge, organisations like ours are only too happy to lend a hand and provide the necessary inputs. This year, we came across such an officer, Shri. G.B. Bhujbal, the Cluster Coordinator of the Lonikand cluster in Haveli taluka of Pune District. Being aware of the CLR radio programme for the teaching of English, he was keen to cooperate in any further inputs to strengthen students’ English skills in his cluster.

On our part, we were keen to trial a ‘peer learning’ approach, whereby children could participate effectively in their own learning in an enjoyable way. The government schools from 4 villages were selected - Lonikand, Waghmare Vasti, Wadu and Tulapur. CLR staff interacted once a month with the students and teachers of Class 5, helping them to devise activities for English vocabulary development, phonics, word recognition skills and sentence structure. The students themselves worked in groups and prepared a variety of simple, low-cost learning materials which they then used among themselves to practise the skills. They enjoyed the group work immensely, and were full of enthusiasm when we suggested organising an ‘English Mela’ for the rest of the schools in the cluster, where they could share the experience with other Class 5 students.

Organising a “mela”

With the Cluster Coordinator’s cooperation, an ‘English Mela’ was held in March 07 at the Zilla Parishad school in Lonikand. 200 students from 4 schools attended, along with the English teachers of Class 5, 6 and 7 from around 20 schools of 3 clusters, including Lonikand. Four ‘stalls’ were organised by the 4 project schools, and everyone participated in the games and activities. Singing of familiar English songs added to the ‘mela’ atmosphere.

This project was a tangible demonstration of how through increased participation of children, even in a difficult subject like English, learning can be both effective and enjoyable. It served as an example of decentralisation at the cluster level with just a few resources. We hope that similar initiatives can be facilitated in other clusters.

“It was fun participating in the mela. We learnt many new things and learning was very easy.”
Asha Kashide, student of Waghmare Vasti ZP school

“The programme has been successful in getting rid of the students’ fear of learning English. They are also very proud that they have made these games.”
Shri. G.B. Bhujbal, Cluster Coordinator - Lonikand
Understanding the Process of Literacy Learning in Marathi of Children in Class 1 and 2 of Government Schools

The average child has a huge and complex language ability by the age of 6. She/he can communicate with adults and peers, with strangers, can sing and recite, play games involving words, etc. Similarly, she/he also has a well-developed perceptual ability, can make and copy patterns, diagrams, etc. Even a child from a fairly deprived economic background, given normal intelligence and reasonable health, is able to do these things.

But while middle-class children from educated families are quickly able to apply and extend these skills to reading and writing, adding these to their resources for communication, learning and recreation, this does not seem to be happening for a large number of children from poor families attending government schools. The skills of reading and writing seem to become quite separated from the natural skills of communication, symbolisation and play. In fact, children from poor backgrounds with even very high levels of oral communicative skills are often seen to be very deficient in reading and writing. Obviously something is going wrong in the very early years of learning to read, in Classes 1 and 2, where children’s reading and writing skills do not keep pace with their normal intelligent conversation and interaction. This study is an attempt to understand the stages children go through in learning reading in school, why some fail and some succeed.

In the first year of the study, we selected four rural schools, and randomly selected ten children in Class 1 from each of these schools. These 40 children were given a short oral and performance test to assess their communication and cognitive skills. During the course of the year, observations were made of all the four teachers teaching reading in the class, and they were interviewed to understand their own ideas about teaching reading. These interviews and observations have been recorded. At the end of the year, children in two of the schools were administered a basic reading test to assess their ability to read simple words from the textbook, and other simple words and short sentences that do not appear in the textbook. The study is to continue into the second year of schooling, with classroom observations, informal and formal testing of children’s reading, and interviews with teachers and parents. Both the process and the findings will be documented and disseminated at the end of the study next year.

Audio Visual Materials for Inductive, Value-Based Teaching

The CLR’s audio-visual instructional slide shows in Marathi and English present environmental and social studies topics that are relevant to primary and middle school syllabi. Entitled “तुम्ही आणि तुमचा परिसर / You and Your Environment”, this A.V. series includes a wide range of topics related to health, ecology, agriculture, industry, geography, history, biology etc.

The slide shows help teachers to create awareness and inculcate values related to children’s physical, social and political environment. They promote interaction, discussion and analysis, thereby fostering participatory learning.

CLR Audio-Visual Lending Library

The 41 slide shows in the series are disseminated each year through our lending library for Marathi and English medium schools in Pune.

We undertook the annual membership drive in July 06. There are 17 member schools this year for the Marathi and English series. Four separate orientation sessions were held for teachers from Marathi and English medium schools to familiarise them with the lending library scheme and to train them to use the slide shows interactively. On an average, about 30 shows were screened every month in the different schools.
Advocacy Through Networking With NGOs and Government Agencies

Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC)

ARC is a network of around 20 organisations in Pune working with underprivileged children. The CLR is the only organisation within the network providing technical support. We have also been involved periodically in perspective-building and in providing inputs in the area of elementary education.

We provided guidance this year for designing a survey that was carried out by ARC members to evaluate the existing infrastructure in municipal schools in Pune City. 20 schools were selected after the survey instrument was designed. Meetings were also held with ARC members on the strategies to be adopted to bring to public consciousness the deplorable state of infrastructure in these schools. The findings of the survey are being consolidated and analysed.

Raising Awareness on the Teaching of Mathematics

The CLR mathematics exhibition in Marathi attempts to promote relevance and meaning in the teaching of mathematics to young children. This periodically-staged exhibition features the entire scope of the primary mathematics curriculum (Classes 1 to 5), and includes displays of teaching-learning materials. It is of interest to teachers, parents and others involved in primary education.

This year, the exhibition was staged in 4 talukas of Pune District, at Baramati, Ambegaon, Junnar and Bhor, in collaboration with the respective Block Education Officers. We also conducted training workshops for teachers, resource persons and cluster coordinators of the Zilla Parishad schools, focussing on the conceptual aspects of children's difficulties in mathematics.

Our mathematics exhibition conveys a dual message

- Make primary mathematics functional and meaningful.
- Teach primary mathematics through concrete experiences.
Early Childhood Education

Building Capacity within NGOs, ICDS and Corporate Programmes for Early Childhood Education

In the area of Early Childhood Education (ECE), the CLR continues to offer capacity-building programmes for different levels of functionaries. We address the following needs in ECE:

- ongoing professional development of pre-school teachers, anganwadi/balwadi workers, and teacher trainers
- promotion of activity-based, experiential learning in ECE centres
- low-cost early learning materials
- greater community awareness about Early Childhood Education

We continue to receive requests from NGOs and government agencies for various forms of technical support towards enhancing the quality of ECE in balwadis and anganwadis. Most teachers come to us with inadequate pre-service training which has been mainly theoretical in content. Hence, our training programmes focus on helping them to link theory to practice.

Inputs for ICDS in collaboration with Jindal South West Foundation (JSWF)

**Tarapore, Thane District**

The CLR had provided technical support to JSWF last year towards strengthening the pre-school component of the ICDS anganwadis in the villages around their Vasind plant, in Kalyan district. We had conducted recurrent training sessions for anganwadi workers (AWWs), and provided teaching-learning materials, together with guidance for monitoring.

As positive feedback was received from ICDS, JSWF requested us for similar inputs for the anganwadis supported by them around their Tarapore plant in Thane district. We conducted the training in three periodic sessions for 28 anganwadi workers. The training sessions incorporated the focus areas of our ECE training as listed in the box. Photographs of their anganwadis initiated a participatory discussion among the workers about the learning environment at these centres.

The CLR Early Learning Kit in Marathi, comprising a handbook and cut-out picture supplement was also provided to the participants.
Trainers' Training for ICDS Supervisors

Mawal Taluka, Pune District

As an outcome of discussions with the CEO of the Pune Zilla Parishad, the CLR initiated an intervention to strengthen the pre-school component within ICDS anganwadis in Mawal taluka.

Our strategy involved enabling the supervisors to serve as field-based trainers of the anganwadi workers in their respective beats. A group of 10 supervisors and 3 Assistant Child Development Project Officers (ACDPOs) attended the monthly trainers' training sessions conducted by the CLR at the taluka-level. These sessions focussed on the content of an activity-based ECE curriculum and tangible activities and materials to be used by the anganwadi workers. Supervisors were equipped with training guidelines and a ‘demonstration set’ of materials. Using these materials, they held regular training sessions in their respective beats and helped the anganwadi workers to understand, through role-play, the use of an adapted version of our Early Learning Kit which was supplied to each anganwadi centre.

CLR staff attended several beat-level training sessions conducted by the supervisors, in order to observe and offer constructive feedback. We also made observation visits to anganwadis in a selection of villages.

Training of Balwadi Teachers

Udgir Taluka, Latur District

Nav Maharashtra Community Foundation (NAVAM), aims to assist NGOs/CBOs and others who are working for the development of rural communities in Maharashtra. The organisation has identified education, human rights, health care and public advocacy initiatives as the priority areas of intervention in the rural sector.

NAVAM requested the CLR to conduct an inservice training programme for balwadi teachers of Gramin Mahila Vikas Sanstha, its partner in Deoni in Udgir taluka of Latur district. The balwadis had been newly set up and the teachers had no prior experience or training.

We conducted the training over ten days in three sessions - the first session of four days being held at Pune in July 06. The second and third inservice sessions were held in Deoni. The basic principles of child development were simplified and explained in depth, as the participants lacked this essential background. The main focus areas of our ECE training were covered, along with the use of the CLR Early Learning Kit provided for each balwadi. The place of the home language in early education was stressed.

The feedback received from the teachers and their supervisor was very positive. The teachers displayed a marked improvement in their understanding of ECE. The teaching methods outlined during the training are reportedly being implemented effectively, and the teachers are regularly using the early learning materials provided. Evaluation of the impact of the training and documentation of the entire input have been planned.
Feedback from a participant at the
NAVAM training programme

“The guidance given by CLR for conducting activities for children is very useful. We have understood the significance of ‘touch’, ‘feel’ and ‘do’ while developing children’s cognitive skills, as opposed to learning only from books.
This training has been a valuable learning experience for me.”

Promoting Story Telling in Early Childhood Education

The CLR's slide series entitled “गंगात-गोण्टी/Story Time” continues to be very popular in Marathi and English medium pre-primary schools in Pune. For both teachers and children, story telling is one of the most mutually satisfying interactions and an invaluable source of language learning especially when varied methods are adopted to engage the interest of children. Story telling is even more vital when the language of instruction is not the same as the child’s home language.

The slide shows are a powerful tool for pre-school teachers to sustain the interest of children. They feature stories from all over the world, both traditional and modern, including a range of Indian tales. This year, a new slide show featuring a Chinese folk tale was developed, entitled “चौर आणि गुण्या मूळगा/The Robber and the Good Son”. The visuals have been rendered in a typical Chinese illustration style. A follow-up activity sheet for children accompanies the story.

The A.V. Lending Library

The slide shows are disseminated through the CLR's A.V. lending library scheme for Marathi and English medium schools. At the beginning of the academic year, member schools choose the slide shows they plan to use, and we loan projectors to those schools that need them. The annual membership drive for 2006-07 was undertaken in July 06 and a total of 18 schools signed up.

Orientation sessions were conducted separately for English and Marathi medium schools, to familiarise pre-primary teachers with the lending library scheme, and to demonstrate how to use the slide shows interactively.

Raising Awareness on Effective ECE

The CLR held a bilingual Marathi/English exhibition in Pune in January 06, entitled “शिक्षण मुळांचे सहभाग माटूंचा / Helping Children Learn”.

This exhibition was designed by us some years ago and is staged periodically in different parts of Maharashtra. It consists of panels and table displays that highlight the important aspects of an activity-based ECE curriculum for 3 to 6 year-olds, and suggest activities to encourage the intellectual growth and creative potential of young children. Teaching methods and materials are presented in a manner easily appreciated by parents and teachers.
This year, we added a new section on the controversial use of media and computers in early childhood. Designed by us keeping in mind the growing trend of television-viewing and computer-based learning in urban schools and homes, this section generated keen interest and debate amongst the visitors.

The exhibition was held for 3 days, and met with an overwhelming response. Apart from parents, the visitors consisted of teachers and principals of several private and government schools, teacher educators, staff of NGOs, teacher trainees from leading training institutes, and others interested in early childhood education. ICDS officials, supervisors and anganwadi workers from Pune and surrounding talukas also attended. In all, over 6000 people visited, including some from neighbouring cities like Sangli, Ahmednagar, Nasik and Kolhapur.

CLR-designed early learning materials and games were made available at the venue, and met with an enthusiastic response from teachers and parents.

**WHAT DO CHILD DEVELOPMENT EXPERTS SAY ABOUT COMPUTER-USE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD?**

*Excerpts from our ECE exhibition panels*

“Drill-and-practice computer programmes improve scores modestly on some tests, in narrow skill areas.”

*Dr. Larry Cuban, Stanford University, USA*

“So-called interactive, computer-based instruction does not provide true interactive but merely a mechanistic response to students’ efforts..... That will take a toll on their intellectual and social development.”

*Dr. Stanley Greenspan, National Institute of Mental Health, USA*
Early Childhood Care and Development

Action Research Related to Early Childhood Care for Survival, Growth and Development

The CLR has over the past few years worked towards promoting the holistic development of children in the birth to 3 years age-group. Research and educational projects undertaken by us have attempted to bring about a greater awareness within families of the developmental significance of the prenatal period, and of the first three years of human life.

We have assisted several NGOs in different states of the country to implement home-based interventions for improving the health, nutrition and psychosocial care of infants within poor families. Upto now, our training and communication materials for this purpose have been generic in nature, with an in-built capacity for local adaptations. In order to systematically develop a process by which the messages and strategies could be effectively adapted to the needs of a particular community, we initiated an action-research project in 3 villages in Mulshi Taluka of Pune district. A further objective of this project was to understand the impact of a caregiver education programme that not only delivers universal care messages, but influences positive change in care behaviours in a particular community.

Developing Locale-Specific Caregiver Education

Understanding Local Strengths and Constraints Related to Child Care

Before launching the caregiver education programme, we developed data collection tools and conducted a baseline survey related to existing knowledge of holistic child care among 193 caregivers in 3 villages. The quantitative data collected was supplemented by qualitative data related to local child care practices. We found the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) approach to be very effective in helping us to modify our existing generic caregiver education package to address local needs.

Modifying the Curriculum for Caregivers

Based on the findings of the surveys and the RRA exercise, we modified the curriculum of our Caregiver Education Package. The following are some examples of messages that had to be added, or that required far greater stress:

- that the tablets to be taken during pregnancy would not result in larger babies, and hence caesarean deliveries.
- that apart from knowledge of appropriate infant foods, the quantity to be given also mattered.
- that home-made pre-mixes of infant foods like rice/moong dal could be kept with grandparents, where farm-labourer mothers may be absent at meal times.
- that an analysis of caregivers’ own daily routines shows that there are common timings when they can interact/play with their babies and toddlers.
Implementing the Adapted Caregiver Education Programme

Three local women were identified as ‘communicators’ in the 3 research villages. ICDS anganwadi workers from 11 neighbouring villages also served as communicators. The CLR trained these women to deliver the adapted curriculum through monthly education sessions for caregivers in their own communities, and to conduct effective home visits.

**A New Strategy**

The local education sessions or meetings that the communicators organised threw up some unexpected challenges. The attendance of mothers and grandmothers was uneven. Hence, we decided to try a strategy whereby caregivers who attended meetings could bring their children along and participate in a ‘play group’. Each play group was equipped with handmade and inexpensive play materials. This proved to be an enormous incentive for attendance, and also helped in the demonstration sessions on various activities for psychosocial stimulation of babies and toddlers.

In all, the CLR conducted 17 days of recurrent training for the communicators. In each of the 3 research villages, about 30 caregiver meetings/play groups, spread over one year, were organised by the respective communicator.

**Organising a ‘Child Care Day’ in each Village**

Last year, the CLR had converted an existing table-top exhibition on child care into a poster series, for easier use at the village level. Certain modifications were also incorporated according to the national policy on child survival, and W.H.O. norms related to neonatal health and nutrition.

These poster exhibitions in Marathi were held at Kule, Chale and Chikhalaon as part of ‘Child Care Days’ in the villages where the research project was being implemented. All activities organised by us during these days were targetted specifically at the male caregivers, and also served to heighten general community awareness about good child care practices. The exhibitions generated a lot of interest among the visitors. Discussion sessions with male caregivers were also held, while the toy-making corner for parents, and water-play corner for toddlers, turned out to be major attractions during the event.

**Feedback from mothers participating in our Caregiver Education programme**

“I have made a mobile myself for my baby to play with. When I smile at him, he smiles back and responds by making sounds. My older son is 3 years old. I ask him to help me in the kitchen and have also made him a picture book using cutouts from some magazines and newspapers.”

“I followed the advice given in the programme, took the IFA tablets regularly and ate extra food every day. People in my village believe that this makes the foetus grow too big, and results in a caesarean delivery. But I had a normal delivery, and my baby’s birth weight was 3.1 kg.”

**Assessing the Impact of the Caregiver Education Programme**

At the end of the programme in the research villages, the questionnaire related to knowledge of holistic child care was once again administered to the participating caregivers, in order to measure the impact of the intervention. Besides the analysis of this quantitative data, qualitative data was gathered through interviews and Focus Group discussions.
Findings

The quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the CLR Caregiver Education Programme had a very positive and considerable impact:

- Caregivers reported significant increase in their knowledge of ways to interact with young children in a stimulating manner. Although awareness of issues related to child health, nutrition, and pre-natal care increased among caregivers, the principal change was related to psychosocial care.

- Caregivers reported changes in actual practices related to psychosocial stimulation of children, and the recognition of noticeable developmental changes following their efforts. Most importantly, they were able to distinguish between proactive and on-demand stimulation, and the benefits of the former.

- While knowledge and practices of all aspects of caregiving had increased, actual caregiving behaviours were constrained by social structures, culture, gender roles, incompatibility between different caregivers in the same family, availability of resources, and other factors.

- As expected, mothers gained more significantly from the programme than older and less educated grandmothers, both in terms of knowledge as well as reported practice. This has a variety of implications for the design and content of caregiver programmes, as grandmothers also play an important role in bringing up young children.

Documentation and booklet on Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)

A consolidated report of this 2 ½ year action-research project will be disseminated to key organisations involved in promoting early childhood development. Organisations who request our technical support in their ECCD interventions would need to understand at the outset the prevailing knowledge and behaviours related to child care in their target communities in order to influence practices. To help such organisations, we have developed a booklet on how to conduct RRA specifically in connection with child care. This booklet is supplemented by a video-documentation of our own use of some of the relevant RRA techniques.

Building Capacity within NGOs to Promote Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)

The CLR assists organisations to set up home-based interventions in poor rural and urban communities and train their field-based workers and trainers. We have been conducting intensive Training of Trainers (TOT) to help participants to devise strategies and plans for implementing caregiver education programmes in their project villages / areas.

Gram Niyojan Kendra (GNK- Plan) works with communities in the Nautanwa and Laxmipur blocks in Uttar Pradesh, strengthening voluntary action in rural development by organising training programmes for volunteers, as well as for women and children from disadvantaged communities, the focus being on integrated child development.

We had earlier trained a group of master trainers from GNK-Plan.

The organisation has been effectively implementing a home-based caregiver education programme in 34 villages for the past five years.
As part of this ongoing programme, a 5-day TOT was conducted by the CLR in March 2007 for the GNK staff from 18 additional project villages as GNK plans to expand its work in these communities. Through a field visit organised to our Mulshi project, the participants were able to observe caregiver meetings and play groups for children in the birth to 3 years age group. They were also able to observe caregivers interacting with babies and toddlers within their homes.

Problems faced during implementation of the ongoing GNK programme in Nautanwa and Laxmipur blocks, and suggestions for possible solutions were discussed. We helped them to formulate a schedule that could assist them in more effective implementation.

**Sadhana Society**

Sadhana Society aims to enhance self-esteem and confidence in Dalit women and children, as well as women and children of nomadic tribes and other disadvantaged groups.

The CLR has been conducting monthly training sessions for their field workers during the past one year for their caregiver education programme. Sadhana has undertaken this work in marginalized urban slum communities in Dehu Road, on the outskirts of Pune.

The CLR’s recurrent training sessions for the Sadhana field staff were interspersed with caregiver meetings in the slums. To make the programme more need-based, we organised a session wherein caregivers met a doctor who addressed their queries related to reproductive health as well as child health and nutrition.

**Advocacy To Promote Holistic Child Care**

To propagate important messages on holistic child care, the CLR organises awareness-raising exhibitions at the community level. This year, our table top exhibition entitled “Vikas Balacha : Sahabhaq Sarvancha” was staged at Mulshi for the staff of ICDS and the Department of Health as part of “ICDS Day” celebrations. A short film on holistic child care developed by the CLR was also screened, followed by a discussion on some of the important messages conveyed through the film.

The group of anganwadi workers who were participants of our training programme, and the communicators from our 3 research villages, worked as volunteers to explain the messages on the exhibition panels to the visitors.

The exhibition elicited a good response, and was attended by over 200 anganwadi workers and helpers, ICDS supervisors, and the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), Mulshi. The Block Development Officer (BDO), Sabhapati, Upasabhapati and staff of the Panchayat Samiti also visited the exhibition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of our ECCD exhibition</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Simple poetic text, photographs and visuals designed specifically for an illiterate or semi-literate audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explains holistic child development and how families can promote it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Conveys prime child care messages for babies and toddlers, related to: Reproductive and child health Nutrition Emotional well-being Psychosocial stimulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Includes a focus on gender equity in caregiving practices.</td>
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Other Professional Activities

Workshops / Conferences / Meetings Attended

Ms. Vidya Ghugri participated as a resource person in the following:

- A workshop organised by Children's Fund India at Pen in Raigad District, in July 06, where she conducted sessions for grassroots level workers on social work methods and skills.

- An inservice training programme for anganwadi workers and balwadi teachers organised by the Karve Institute of Social Sciences at Pune in March 07. She gave a presentation on creativity and environmental education.

Ms. Anjali Gokhale participated as a resource person in the following:

- A consultation on policy and implementation issues for effective early childhood care and development (ECCD), organised jointly by Aide et Action and Young Lives Policy Coordination Office at Hyderabad in September 06. She gave a presentation on the CLR's work in the area of ECCD.

- The EduAction Workshop on Education and Livelihoods organised by Aide et Action at Hyderabad in December 06. She conducted sessions on approaches and materials for home-based interventions for holistic child care in disadvantaged communities.

- A workshop for ICDS and Health Department functionaries organised by Rajmata Jijau Mother Child Health & Nutrition (RJMCHN) Mission of Maharashtra State, held at Aurangabad in December 06. She gave a presentation on the CLR ECCD programmes, and displayed our poster exhibition on holistic child care.

- A workshop organised by Bhavishya Alliance at Mumbai in February 07 to design an IEC/BCC campaign, where she gave a presentation on CLR's IEC materials for promoting better child care.

Ms. Hema Kulkarni attended a national seminar on supplementary materials in English organised by SSA - Jharkhand at Ranchi in December 06, where she gave a presentation on CLR's work in this area.

Ms. Mini Shrinivasan participated in the following:

- An interview-cum-phone-in programme on the teaching of English, on Doordarshan's Sahyadri channel in August 06.

- National Workshop on Improving the Quality of Education through Good Instructional Design organised by the Quest Alliance in Bangalore in November 06.

- As a resource person in a programme organised by Ashta No Kai for Japanese students from Oberlin University visiting Pune in February 07. She gave a presentation on “Children's Rights in India”.

Ms. Mini Shrinivasan, Ms. Zakiya Kurrien and Dr. John Kurrien participated in the following:

- National Seminar on Quality of Education at Jaipur in January 07, organised by Digantar and ICICI-SIG. Dr. Kurrien chaired a session at the seminar.

- National Partners’ Meet of the Karuna Trust, held at Nagpur in February 07. Dr. Kurrien gave a presentation on Dalit Education, and Ms. Kurrien served as a facilitator in the group discussion related to gender issues in education.
Ms. Zakiya Kurrien participated in the following:

- As a resource person in the EduAction Thematic Workshop on Education and Livelihoods organised for NGOs and government agencies in Hyderabad in December 06. She conducted sessions on effective curriculum, methods and materials for Early Childhood Education.

- As a resource person at a state-level workshop organised by YASHADA, Pune, in September 06, for senior ICDS functionaries and trainers of Anganwadi Workers Training Centres. She gave a talk on issues related to the preschool component of the ICDS in Maharashtra.

- A seminar on Child Rights organised at Pune in July 06 by Holistic Child Development India. She gave a presentation on Advocacy for the Young Child’s Right to Survival, Growth and Development. Ms. Anjali Gokhale also attended the seminar.

- As a guest speaker at the All Members Meet of the Azim Premji Foundation at Bangalore in April 06. She gave a presentation on the Teaching of Reading in Elementary Schools.

- As an invitee of the Maharashtra State Department of Women and Child Development at Mumbai in November 06, to give a presentation at Mantralaya on the CLR’s technical support for Early Childhood Education. She also outlined specific strategies to strengthen the preschool component of the ICDS. The officials of the Rajmata Jijau Mother Child Health & Nutrition Mission, and members of the Bhavishya Alliance attended the presentation.

Dr. John Kurrien participated in the following:

- A seminar on Community Radio organised by OneWorld, South Asia at New Delhi in June 06. He gave a talk on the CLR radio programme for the teaching of English.

- A colloquium convened by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust at Hyderabad in July 06 to examine the feasibility of starting an Institute of Education.

- A meeting convened by the Aga Khan Foundation to discuss a draft report on “Financing of Elementary Education”, at New Delhi in October 06.

- As a guest speaker at a seminar organised by Afairs at Kolkata in February 07, for principals of English medium schools.

The CLR invited Fr. Godfrey D’Lima in June 06 to give a presentation on the work of his organisation, Vishwamandal Sewashram, in the education of tribal children in north Maharashtra. The materials developed by them were also displayed.

**Committee Memberships**

Dr. John Kurrien served as a member of the following:

- Executive Committee of the National Mission for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) set up by the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

- National Focus Group on the Teaching of English, constituted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as part of the National Curriculum Framework Review.

- Advisory Board of English Language Teaching Institute of Symbiosis (ELTIS), Pune.

Ms. Zakiya Kurrien served as a member of the National Expert Group for Assessment in Elementary Education constituted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

Ms. Mini Shrinivasan served as a member of the Executive Committee of ARC (Action for the Rights of the Child) Pune, as a representative of CLR.
Funding

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We are grateful to the SIG of ICICI Bank Ltd. for the grant to develop and publish a Class 6 reader-cum-activity book to accompany the CLR radio programme for teaching integrated English skills.

We are also grateful to the Sir Ratan Tata Trust for funding the development and production of the CLR bilingual story books in English-Marathi and English-Hindi.

Acknowledgements

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We gratefully acknowledge the guidance and cooperation of the members of our Governing Council. The members are:

Ms. Shirin Darasha  Ms. Zakiya Kurrien  
Ms. Shridevi Mukhi  Mr. Ardeshir Dubash  
Dr. John Kurrien  Mr. Dharmasukh Nanavati  
Dr. Statira Wadia  Mr. Milon Nag  
Mr. Gautam Patel  

The CLR team at the newly renovated premises