

Asia Regional Learning Through Play (LTP) Conference 2004

Introduction

The 1st All-India Learning Through Play (LTP) Conference organised by The Bala Mandir Research Foundation (BMRF) was held at The Conference Centre, Chennai on 21st and 22nd January 2004. The Conference brought together, for the first time, partners in the city and potential partners across India of the LTP Calendar Parent Education Project since its introduction in Bala Mandir in 1997. The participants included representatives from Hincks-Dellcrest, Canada, as well as ICDS, NGOs, ECCD training institutions, schools and child care and medical professionals.

The key objectives of the Conference were to introduce the various uses and applications of the Calendar across different socio-economic strata of society, as well as discuss and review the LTP projects undertaken so far and plan the next steps forward to include more users and domains. The conference was informative and interactive, consisting of varied presentations and dynamic group discussions.

Presentations

1. Envisioning Child Development - Dr. Indu Balagopal

Every child is a miracle, and all children are special. They have their own unique personality and abilities, but there is a commonality of development that is influenced by external factors. The adults and children in the child's immediate environment play a crucial role in developing and guiding the child's potential. This is implicit in any interactive programme for children.

It has always been recognised that children's development occurs in the physical, mental and psycho-social aspects of life, yet many students and child care workers struggle to comprehend this holistic approach to child development. The Hincks-Dellcrest Learning Through Play (LTP) Calendar has simplified the jargon into five easily understood domains as follows:

- **Sense of Self:**
Enabling children to learn about themselves and their feelings, so that they feel loved, capable, and self-confident. As a consequence they develop good self-esteem.

- **Physical Development:**
Assisting children in coordination and control of body movements, in order to improve and enhance physical skills.
- **Relationships:**
Guiding children to build relationships with family members and others, so as to develop a sense of security and empathy.
- **Understanding:**
Stirring the curiosity of children, to discover and learn about the world around them, thereby helping them to expand their knowledge and enable critical thinking.
- **Communication:**
Training children to listen attentively, understand clearly and express thoughts, ideas and feelings articulately, thereby helping them to connect and communicate well.
- **Environment:**
Providing children a safe, conducive and culturally appropriate environment and making them aware of ecology, conservation and harmonious living.

We, in India, have added the last new dimension to the developmental domains by recognising the importance of the influence of the immediate and larger environment in the child's life. By introducing it as a special domain, we have tried to underscore the impact of nurturing the child through care and concern, and the implications of inculcating the right attitudes, behaviour and compassion in the child, as also a sensitivity to ecology.

The calendar has chosen the drawings and the messages with such meticulousness that the opportunity for creativity, fantasy and learning of values become intrinsic in the play activities.

The Strategies For Achieving These Are:

- The Life Cycle Approach, which considers intervention at each stage of a child's development, accelerating and building on earlier positive action and where necessary, facilitating rectification.

- Improving the active learning capacity of young children, through building the capacity of parents and the community in interactive processes of stimulation.
- Considering child development holistically: health, nutrition, psycho-social aspects, identification of and intervention for disability.
- Advocating the family as the first "learning site" of the child and building community support for good parenting practices.
- Where the family is not available, making care-givers in institutions a good family substitute and providing an enriched interpersonal environment.

The LTP Calendar is filled with important information like activities for different ages, the holistic approach to children's development and the ways to build their confidence and develop healthy relationships.

Apart from these, the Calendar also serves as a good reference book for doctors and other medical personnel dealing with children.

For professionals caring for children, and students of child development, it serves as a guide that gives the developmental milestones and age-appropriate activities. Negative parenting practices can be replaced with sensible play and developmental activities.

The Calendar can also be used as a tool in special education. The clearly enunciated stages of development serve as a valuable resource for training of persons in dealing with children with special needs i.e. those who are physically, mentally or emotionally challenged or are sensory deprived. The pictures are carefully thought out and show the postures that children adopt at the various ages. This helps in diagnosing and planning.

Apart from all these, the Calendar can be used directly by all those in a parenting role. It helps build capacities in parents so that they can understand the child, and give the right inputs and stimulate play activities that will help the child grow into a responsible and productive adult. And most important, it highlights the element of joy in the process for both child and parent.

And we all know that optimum learning and development takes place when there is a sense of well-being and peace in the child.

2. From A Seed To A Banyan Tree (September 1997 - December 2003) - Ms. Maya Gaitonde

The Learning Through Play (LTP) Calendar Programme seems to have expanded into areas, which in 1997 we ourselves had not envisaged. What is very significant is that it seems to have unfolded in a most natural "pre-destined" rather than "pre-planned" manner. Our work with the LTP Calendar Programme has led us to understand that the Calendar can "mean so much to so many" and it has in it the potential to address on behalf of the child not only parents but also all those in a parenting role.

The Bala Mandir - Hincks-Dellcrest Partnership - As It Started

This wonderful interactive partnership started with Kannaki Packianathan - an exceptional bureaucrat known in Tamil Nadu for her ethics, dynamism and compassion. It was regard and respect for her and her judgement that brought us both together on 24th September 1997 - a very significant date for Bala Mandir - the 1st Memorial Anniversary of our late and beloved Founder Smt. Manjubhashini who we are convinced would have been most supportive of this partnership.

We had had a few interactions at the time including the first Workshop on the LTP Calendar (Birth - 3 Years). We had liked immediately the material we saw and more significant was Dellcrest's openness, caring attitude, and commitment to help the Child. Added to this was the instantaneous trust and the freedom conveyed to us by Andrew and Ramani, to work with the Calendar in a manner we thought most suitable for India.

In October 1997 we were left with a sense of excitement for the future - a fulfillment of our desire to take our service activities into yet another dimension of ECCD.

We were also left with:

- a. Copies of the Calendar (Birth - 3 Years) - English & Tamil.
- b. A few copies of the 3 - 6 Years Calendar - English.
- c. "Good Beginnings" by Judith Evans.
- d. The Dellcrest Home Visitor's Training Manual.
- e. A few videos and handouts.

We had in Bala Mandir in 1997:

- 48 years of experience in the area of child care below and above 6 years (approximately 5000 children have passed through the portals of Bala Mandir).
- 40 years of experience and professional expertise in running a Kindergarten School for the community.
- 5 years of experience in running a Day Care Centre.

Ms. Padma Srinath's training on the Calendar for our first three resource persons; Hema Srinivas, Lakshmi Gopal and Rekha Sudarsan, helped them gain a clear understanding of ECCD and gave them the confidence to take this project beyond the confines of Bala Mandir to parents in the nearby slum of children who attended our Day Care Centres.

The strengths of the LTPC tool, which were identified in India as early as 1998, are being proved and endorsed time and again. These are:

- The universality and simplicity of the messages as well as their cultural appropriateness.
- The age appropriateness of child development shown clearly in the Calendar and the practicality of the child care activities shown in the home environment through the pictures.
- The clear set of "parenting values" of:
 - Unconditional love and care,
 - Sensitivity to the child's needs,
 - Emphasis on child led activity and
 - The patience and perseverance and alternatives recommended in handling behavioral problems of children.

The Strengths Of The LTPC Project In India

- The freedom given by Hincks-Dellcrest to BMRF to evolve new strategies to take the project forward.
- The unstinted support, time and effort put in voluntarily by members of the BMRF team.
- The inclusion of health, nutrition and early intervention on disability as part of the resource material and user manual, suitable to India.
- The inclusion of "E" - Environmental linkages for the child's development.

The seed that was sown in 1997 has taken root and grown into a tree in BMRF and, like a Banyan tree, from it have come branches, which have eventually found roots in various programmes:

a. Bala Mandir - Institutional Experiences.

- b. Partnership with Government Programmes.
- c. As a Training Tool in KG / Creche Training Programmes.
- d. Joy of Parenting Programme - With parents and teachers in Schools.
- e. Translation of LTPC.
- f. Developing linkages with NGOs in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and extending LTPC as an "inclusive" tool.

A. Bala Mandir - Institutional Experiences

1. Institutional circumstances forced us to take over care of the infants and toddlers with the help of the House mothers trained on LTPC. Suddenly the whole dimension of child care in Bala Mandir changed - We understood the Calendar could be adapted as a tool for training child care workers in institutions and thus started the training of all Bala Mandir staff caring for children below 6 years.

2. While training mothers from the nearby slum one day - Hema while sharing the Dellcrest video on breast-feeding - noted some of the Bala Mandir adolescent boys peeping through the window - quite intrigued at the film. When we discussed this episode later - it struck us that our Bala Mandir boys and girls, since they had grown-up in our institution, had no direct or indirect experience of breast-feeding but needed definitely the knowledge when they later entered family life. What started as awareness through the video viewing led Hema to speak to both boys and girls 15-18 years (orphan/destitute) about the concepts in the Calendar. This led to a full-fledged Training of Adolescents Programme, which helped them to understand not only their future responsibilities but also the possible stress and trauma that their parents must have undergone before giving them up.

We took a very positive viewpoint and in a strange way it changed resentment in their hearts to an understanding - and a more positive attitude to being in the institution and being rehabilitated back with their family.

It enabled us to speak to them about many other related issues, such as sex education, peer interaction, family life - needs of their "younger brothers and sisters in Bala Mandir", as well as many others. It also helped our adolescents to freely discuss their inner-feelings of insecurity and resentment, etc. and clarify their doubts during the sessions.

Senior working girls 18-25 years (orphan) who continued to stay on in a separate hostel were now given what we termed Family Life / Real Life Education and the Calendar was used as the tool to help focus on various family issues.

This ongoing learning programme now not only benefits the Institutional Adolescent but has also been extended to the adolescents in the School run by us. Every year in April we have 2-3 week-long sessions for the Std. X and XII (O and A-Level) students. As we gain more and more experience interacting with larger numbers of adolescents within the Bala Mandir Institution - We are now confident of offering this Programme, as the base for Adolescent Programmes - In schools and community based organisations.

The Bala Mandir Institutional Experience Continues:

- **Care-Givers:**

Training care-givers of children below 6 years in Bala Mandir is now an ongoing in-service programme. The Calendar pages - blown up to a 2'-3' size adorn each of the rooms age-appropriately. They form a sort of daily ready reckoner for the care-giver - a reminder of the child's age appropriate needs.

- **Senior Matrons:**

Senior matrons hitherto free, while their own children were away in school, showed a great deal of interest and offered to help out with feeding time and play time in the infant and toddler section in the fore-noon. We suddenly had more staff and a better care-ratio.

- **Dellcrest Training:**

The names "Dellcrest" and "Calendar" had now become part of Bala Mandir's parlance. Many of the senior staff requested that they also be trained. This training now termed Dellcrest Training for Care-givers in Institutions helped us discover that the "Calendar tool" could help staff:

- Learn about the child's early needs - which could have remained unknown to them.
- Help care-givers in institutions like Bala Mandir understand behavioural problems of older children, especially in the areas of Sense of Self, Relationship and Communication.
- By focusing on their inner parental feelings, so far suppressed due to their own socio-economic deprivation, create a sense of joy and a feeling of being truly needed.
- Thinking about the ideas expressed in the Calendar helped them to better understand their own childhood and undergo a fruitful self-analysis process.

- **Parents:**

Bala Mandir's experience with reaching out to the parents of children being admitted into its 2 Day Care Centres has given the LTPC Programme a new dimension. Both Hema Srinivas and increasingly from January 2000 onwards Lakshmi Gopal have been in constant contact with parents.

 - Their interaction firmed up the view that LTPC was an ideal one to one tool in the hand of a trainer conveying messages when working with unlettered parents and those from the nearby slums.
 - The increased interest and awareness among our workers and its inherent potential as a communication tool made us confident to move out into the surrounding socio-economic deprived community of the nearby slums on a Home Visitors Programme.
 - The model shared by Hincks-Dellcrest was now analysed in greater detail and tried out sporadically with positive results and this led us to pilot a Home Visitors Project. This Pilot Project involved 2 ECCD professionals accompanied by experienced and talented Creche Workers making visits to the homes of all the children admitted in our Creche. They carried with them milestone assessment sheets and discussed age appropriate child development points with the parent.
 - The outcome of this 6 month project was an assessment of:
 - Mothers' understanding/awareness of child development.
 - Clear awareness of the socio-economic and cultural environment the children live in.
 - Home Visitors relevance - and the Programme's relevance.

At the closing stages of the Project there were already strong indications that, in the long run, dividing our 2 Creches along the lines of the two Calendars would greatly enhance the child care services we were providing. Thus from June 2001 children between 6 months - 3+ years were admitted at one Centre and 3+ - 6 years at the other. Changes in infrastructure, re-organisation of routines and schedules and re-allocation of staff based on abilities were undertaken.

The Bala Mandir Institution Now Has:

- Training of care-givers on an on-going basis and a yearly evaluation session for those already trained.
- Training of Crèche workers as and when they join the Bala Mandir Crèche and Day Care as well as a six monthly evaluation session for all workers.

- Home Visitors Programme twice a year covering all children in the relevant age group. The Programme is turning out to be an excellent model for sharing with others.
- On-going parenting training for all parents when they admit their children into the Crèche. Every mother and as many fathers as possible compulsorily undergo LTPC training for 3 sessions within 3 months of admitting their child to our Day Care Centre. Parent training is now a pre-condition for admitting children into our Day Care and continues to keep us in constant touch with insights into parents and the family's understanding and attitudes to the LTPC messages.
- A Resource Centre where ECCD trainees from other institutions come and spend $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 day to get oriented on the parenting programme. This move was particularly necessary because increasingly Bala Mandir is being identified as an ECCD Training Institution and we have NGOs and the Government approaching us to train their personnel on Parenting in our institution.

B. Partnership With Government Programmes

In March 1998 E.V. Shantha, then Project Officer, UNICEF - Chennai (who had met up with Andrew and Ramani in October 1997) because of her own vast experience and expertise in ECCD, identified this Calendar Programme as one with immense potential and introduced us to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) of Tamil Nadu and organised through UNICEF a training programme on LTPC for their personnel. The feedback from the trainees after they had field-tested the tool and the new knowledge was:

- While it contained knowledge we in India already had - the way it had been documented and presented was indeed unique.
- The focus of the Calendar was ECCD - directly addressed to Parents - an initiative that had not yet been taken up in such an organised way. This was also the expressed opinion of all the experts who had looked at it.
- This method of "talking to parents on behalf of the child" was culturally appropriate and most acceptable.
- 8th - 9th Century Tamil literature had poetry/prose dedicated to child development in what we now termed the "Dellcrest" way.

In August 1998, UNICEF, Chennai invited BMRF to present at a Workshop on ECCD this new initiative on "Parenting" for participants from Government, NGOs and Professionals.

The overwhelming response and interest shown by many present led UNICEF to identify the Calendar as an excellent tool for parent education and offered to fund the indeginising process of the Calendar.

A panel of experts including ECCD and Medical Professionals were called in to endorse the validity of the Calendar for usage in India and adapt the messages and pictures into a tool to be used in the urban slums and rural India.

Discussions with field level personnel in December 1998 of the Department of Social Welfare and contribution from its artist led to the formulation of a new tool - The Flip Chart for use by larger audiences of parents. This tool was further endorsed in March 1999 at an invitation workshop, which involved NGOs working in ECCD and other professionals and technical experts. Their positive responses and suggestions led to the finalisation of the pictures, messages and instructional material of the Flip Chart.

This Flip Chart was further field-tested by UNICEF and after a series of consultations was printed for use in 30,000 Anganwadi Centres throughout Tamil Nadu in April 2000.

Another interesting outcome of the March 1999 Workshop was the formation of the "Network for Information on Parenting" - a coming together of NGOs, Research and Educational Institutions, Associations, Government Departments and Professionals concerned about the Child and with a firm conviction that addressing Parents in an organised way is a new dimension that ECCD should take.

While no doubt the idea of the Flip Chart had evolved from the LTPC idea and still focused on the child below 3 years, it now had a totally new format and the following new features:

- Pictures were now specifically South Indian and representative of homes in rural India or urban slums and represented specifically the socio-economically deprived strata of society.
- It was further specifically designed to cater to gender specific needs.
- It clearly visually involved grand parents and supported specifically traditional child rearing techniques.
- Captions for the pictures were no longer children's messages but statements.
- Within the tool detailed messages for SPRUC were incorporated.
- Along with SPRUC messages were incorporated points for nutrition, health and immunization, and a checklist for disability.

- The tool had moved from a one to one usage to one, which could give the holistic child development and care messages to parents in groups and the community at large.

From 2002 the Flip Chart has been used effectively:

- To reach out to parents through 30,000 ICDS Centres in the State.
- To reach initially Public Health Centres through the Public Health Department in 2 districts of Tamil Nadu, as part of a Central Government - UNICEF sponsored Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) initiative.
- To reach NGOs with community-based organisations through a process of networking.
- To reach out to women's Self Help Groups.

And now since the Tamil tool has been made available as a booklet in English (and was presented in October 2000 at an International Conference organised by UNICEF in New Delhi for ECCD Professionals, NGOs and ICDS personnel from all the States in India), it is being used as a sharing tool across the country and internationally.

C. LTPC As A Training Tool In KG / Crèche Training Programmes

In 1999, BMRF entered into partnerships with three new institutions. All of them have well trained resource persons, are themselves running Kindergarten / Nursery / Crèche teacher's training programmes and were keen to use the LTPC tool as one of the resource materials in their training programmes.

Each of these educational institutions caters to a specific socio-economic strata of society i.e.

1. Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) - Urban poor and rural areas.
2. Children's Garden School (CGS) Society - Lower and middle income.
3. SCS Kothari Academy for Women - Affluent strata of society.

This has given us excellent exposure and ability to make suitable adaptations to the Calendar Programme based on socio-economic and cultural needs.

Initially between July 1999 & March 2000 the entire training programme consisted of over 20-25 sessions, which included:

- Inputs on Brain Development, Child Development and Importance of Play.
- Training on the Calendar.
- Guidelines for interacting with parents.
- Indian cultural, traditional and spiritual values of Parenting.

- Interaction, discussion, role-play, games and Dellcrest video viewing.

Those trained by BMRF in ICCW, SCS Kothari Academy and Children's Garden School are now in a position to handle the training on LTPC in their own institutions independently.

They have evolved and introduced many interesting games and methodology into the LTPC training, which is an intervention programme into their already on-going training.

D. Joy of Parenting Programme

The increasing perception that all parents could benefit from LTPC in India has led BMRF to formulate the Joy of Parenting Programme.

- Programmes involve parent sessions in small groups, in the morning for mothers who are housewives, and in the evening for fathers and working mothers.
- The programmes are organised in the premises of schools that have toddler and KG sections, and which have adopted the programmes and have the same qualitative thinking as LTPC.
- The Joy of Parenting Programme based on LTPC for parents was started in April 2001. The training schedule as envisaged worked successfully and after the first 5 and a half-day intensive sessions, 3 follow-ups (once a term) for 3 academic years were held.
- Into the training and related to LTPC the following topics have been factored in; Multiple Intelligences Discovering and Actualising Potential (PAC), Parenting styles, Indian traditional and cultural values of Parenting, Time Management, Understanding ourselves and others.
- The follow-up sessions include discussions around a series of thought provoking stimulating poems and passages, which help to sustain positive parenting attitudes and practices.

BMRF plans to bring out a "User Manual" soon, the first draft of which is ready. The Manual is a kind of self-learner, which parents can use, and only need to be in contact with a resource person for advice as and when they need it.

The Joy of Parenting Programme has been adopted by Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram and Padma Seshadhri Bala Bhavan (PSBB) schools in Chennai.

An in-service training programme for teachers in schools has been the natural fallout of training programmes for parents. It will enable / empower their

teachers to take these messages to the parents of children in their care. This programme it was felt has a 3-fold purpose:

- a. Give teachers a better insight into the child's age appropriate needs.
- b. Revise knowledge of child development - playway methodology.
- c. Create within the school the necessary resource to keep in touch with the parents.

The adoption of the programme has 3 stages:

- a. Bala Mandir resource persons take sessions for parents and teachers.
- b. In the following year they monitor and observe the training programme conducted by trained teachers of the institution.
- c. The institution takes over the training themselves and only takes resource materials from BMRF.

Each year we have enhanced our training skills, and the feedback from the various participants as well as an evaluation, formed the basis of the Draft Training Module.

E. Translation of LTPC

This interesting activity, which started with Dellcrest's request for a translation into Bengali in February 2000, has expanded into translation work into Hindi, Telegu, Kannada and Malayalam.

- **Bengali:**
The Bengali experience involved calling in a set of Bengali ladies, educated in their native Bengali and now living in Chennai for various reasons. They included a housewife, young mother, a grand mother, a trained teacher, a social worker, etc. We gave them a full training on the Calendar, after which we asked them to work on the translation. What emerged was wonderful artwork on the Parenting theme, a beautiful poem explaining Child Development and of course qualitative translation.
- **Kannada:**
The Kannada translation took on a slightly different methodology. We had two Kannada speaking and literate resource persons who were very well versed in the LTPC concept. One was our own Hema Srinivas and the other Tara Srinivas, a Child Development consultant, closely involved in our Network. The two of them worked on the translation after which they set up a panel to review the translation. The panelists included a Kannada writer, a theatre and media personality, a freelance journalist and a teacher, all of whom through the years had worked very closely

with children, on projects related to children and child care issues in the community.

The Kannada LTPC has been widely field-tested through partnerships with NGOs working in Bangalore slums and surrounding rural areas. It was presented at a final review workshop at which the first printed copies were presented to well known personalities in the field of ECCD.

- **Telegu & Malayalam:**

The Telegu and Malayalam translations are ready for dissemination through pilot projects in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. In June and October 2003 orientation and awareness on LTPC workshops were held in Hyderabad and Trivandrum where ECCD and medical professionals, representatives of educational and research institutions and ICDS personnel endorsed the LTPC as a tool and the translation as well.

- **Hindi:**

The Hindi translation is at the draft stage.

All translations were undertaken by a panel of persons whose mother tongue was the specific language.

The Partnership Is Strengthened And We Acknowledge

The partnership was formed with the first visit of Mr. Andrew Reesor-McDowell - Director, Centralized Services, Hincks-Dellcrest Children's Centre, Toronto, Canada to Chennai in October 1997 and has been steadily strengthened over time.

- The October 1997 visit was highlighted with the launch of the Birth - 3 Years Calendar at a well-attended workshop, the beginning of the partnership and a sharing of thoughts.
- The October 1999 visit saw the official launch of the 3 - 6 Years Calendar and Andrew's meeting with our partners. The resource team also gave a better and more comprehensive understanding of the work around the Calendar and laid the foundation for Hincks-Dellcrest to enter into a formal partnership with BMRF.
- January 2001 - Andrew was with us for the inauguration of the Joy of Parenting Programme - the name we have coined for direct interaction with parents on the LTPC.

3 significant visits - at each the formation of closer ties, in depth sharing and appreciation of each other's endeavours to work for the Child.

Andrew's calm and compassionate personality, his remarkable ability to assess the situation, his sensitivity to India's need and his deep understanding of human nature have helped us focus on our endeavours in sustaining and strengthening this partnership.

When Andrew was last with us, he spoke of the seed that had sprouted in Toronto and been transplanted to India and grown into a banyan tree.

The speed with which this project perhaps seems to be growing in India is because "it's the right idea at the right time".

Everywhere with Government or NGO programmes, while poverty and social factors still remain obstacles in enhancing ECCD, there has been a need-based shift to move beyond mere health and nutrition issues, to psycho-social issues of child development and this Parenting Programme seems to fulfill that need admirably.

Ramani Jayakumar's visits to Chennai every year and her meetings and interactions with us have been a very vital input in strengthening our partnership. In her quiet but very friendly way:

- She has clarified all our doubts and given us a better understanding as to how the programme is perceived and implemented in Canada.
- Her own knowledge of ECCD and her experiences in the field have given us many necessary insights into the LTFC.
- We believe she has done a wonderful job of expressing the Indian point of view in Canada. Her almost dual role of representing India in Canada and Canada in India has smoothed the pathway of the partnership.
- Every time she has been with us she has most thoughtfully brought for us the relevant videos, resource materials and books to enhance our Centre and help take the programme one step forward.

Rochelle's contribution from time to time refining the materials prepared by us and her many practical suggestions, as also the sharing of Dellcrest resource materials, have helped us take this Parenting Programme forward in a qualitative manner.

Over the last few years Hincks-Dellcrest has supported the creation of a Resource Centre at BMRF, which is increasingly used for training programmes and meetings around LTFC.

The India-end of the partnership we believe has contributed mainly through the remarkable and dedicated, honorary services of Hema Srinivas, Lakshmi Gopal and Usha Ramakrishnan. Each one of them has been a vital contributor in taking this programme forward.

Hema Srinivas has been the backbone of the LTPC programme.

- She has spent countless hours in training, disseminating, formulating projects, documenting and counselling with LTPC.
- Her total dedication to the cause of the Child and her own insights into effective parenting have greatly enhanced the quality and outreach of LTPC.
- Her contribution to the adaptation of the tool into the Flip Chart has made her the main resource person in training on both tools.
- She has now moved to Bangalore and taken up the programme extensively in Kannada in her home State of Karnataka.

Lakshmi Gopal's contribution has been more literary.

- Her wonderful songs.
- Her quick ability at translation of all our materials into Tamil.
- Her formulation of role-plays and games.
- Her constant intervention with new ideas, thoughts, slogans etc. and
- Of course her remarkable study of ancient Tamil literature has brought in a quality quite difficult to describe.

Usha Ramakrishnan, who is a member of the resource team, has:

- Brought in a great deal of technical clarity.
- Introduced new inputs into the training module regarding personality development and multiple intelligences, etc.
- Interaction with her has helped all of us get a better understanding of disability.

Ambika Sen, a new member of the team, has been co-ordinating the LTPC Programme in Bala Mandir and has taken over the Joy of Parenting Programme in Chennai.

Dr. Anandalakshmy, whom we consider not only our philosopher, but also our guide, is a consultant on ECCD who constantly helps us to remain focused in our work and whose vast experience in ECCD is a great source of strength to us.

Others, from time to time, who have made contributions and in some cases moved on are:

- Padma Srinath - ECCD Consultant - whose knowledge and training skills helped us through the early stages of the LTPC Project.
- Rekha Sudarshan - Psychologist - who put in all the work in the training programmes, documentation, etc. during the stage of adaptation.

- Jaya Krishnaswami - Coordinator, Madhuram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children - was the one who first introduced us to sensitivity, disability and the need for inclusion and the ability of LTPC to address parents on these issues as well, and who still from time to time continues to help with refining material, technically as well as with language expression.
- Swathantra Shakthivel - Co-ordinator, Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram - has been associated with LTPC right from 1998 when she lent her experience to the panel to adapt the Calendar. She continues to be member of the resource team and works in her school.
- Prema Daniel - ECCD Co-ordinator, SCS Kothari Academy - has been a very involved member of the LTPC team and her work through her school has been adding to our experience. Her major contribution has been to convert LTPC into a tool for Kindergarten teachers and use it to help parents and teachers understand "academic readiness".
- Usha Raghavan - Principal, Bala Sevika Training Institute, ICCW, TN - has been a strong supporter of the LTPC tool and it was her idea of using LTPC as an intervention tool into Kindergarten training programmes. Her insights and experiences as a trainer have greatly enhanced our training skills.
- Dr. Indu Balagopal has joined the growing LTPC team very recently. However to her will go the credit of all the editing work of the publications that will be brought out by BMRF around the LTPC. Her remarkable literary skills and ability to express the most complex in simple terminology is a wonderful resource BMRF has.
- And of course we are grateful to all our administrative staff and workers who have unstintingly supported the programme. In particular, Ms. Meena Chandrasekar who helps co-ordinate and organise our programmes, Ms. Lakshmi who spends hours feeding in papers and programmes into the computer and Ms. Uma who takes care of all the finances.

3. Early Childhood Development & Parenting Project, Karnataka, India - Ms. Hema Srinivas

A. Bala Mandir Research Foundation (BMRF) partnered with Community Health Cell (CHC), Bangalore in the project and the initial response to CHC's invitation to join the partnership was from 15 organisations.

1 Stepping Stone	6. DEEDS	11. TREDA
2. APD	7. Reds	12. CHC
3. APSA	8. Sanjivini Trust	13. World Vision
4. Deena Seva Sangha	9. MAYA	14. Belaku Trust
5. Navajeevan	10. TRED	15. Preethi Mahilodaya

B. All 15 organisations sent personnel for the 5 days of training in April - May 2002 conducted in Bangalore by Ms. Hema Srinivas and Ms. Lakshmi Gopal of BMRF, Chennai.

C. At the 1st review meeting held in July 2002, conducted by Ms. Maya Gaitonde and Ms. Hema Srinivas, World Vision, Bellaku Trust and Ms. Preetii Mahlodaya, while being very appreciate of the LTPC parenting programme, expressed their inability to participate in the partnership.

In the forenoon, organisational heads endorsed their willingness and involvement in the partnership and shared the very positive feedback they had received from the field level workers who had been trained on LTPC.

After the initial training each field level worker was to be in touch with approximately 25 to 30 parents and disseminate the LTPC Parenting messages, even while they assessed Parental understanding of child development.

In the afternoon the workers shared their further experiences in the field and feedback from parents to whom they had given the messages.

D. Between end October and early December 2002 Ms. Hema Srinivas made a personal visit to 10 partner organisations:

- Discussed project implementation,
- Reviewed the extent of involvement of each organisation in the project partnership and
- Identified gaps and further support needed.

1. Stepping Stone - (Day Care for working parents) - was using it for conducting sessions for pregnant mothers and teachers of their Day Care Centre.
2. Association of People with Disability (APD) - (School for children with disability and an outreach home based programme in slums) - had gone ahead and confidently trained 6 more field level staff and already conducted workshops on Parenting and found a very positive feedback from their parents.

3. Association For Promoting Social Action (APSA) - (Institution for child labour, street children and working in the community with women and rehabilitation of adolescents) - The two housemothers who had attended the programme had not only trained other staff but also empowered young adolescents in the institution with confidence. They felt the Parenting values they had learnt in the programme had greatly enhanced their personal skills and confidence in handling young children.
4. Deena Seva Sangh - (NGO involved in community health) - They were able to organise workshops for parents in the slum they serve as part of their monthly on-going community programme. Their training methodology is excellent and they are able to go beyond LTPC.
5. Navajivana Pragathi Kendra - (Running Pre-Schools, Day Care Centres, Mahila Sanghas and Community Health Care Programme for a large slum colony at Sudamnagar) - Their outreach is huge and as an observer of their training sessions the feedback is that they have really been able to go well beyond the LTPC messages.
6. Development Education Society (DEEDS) - (Non-formal Education and Day Care Centre and family services in slums and rural communities) - Apart from taking the programme into their own organisation DEEDS was keen to train all their field level workers in their projects in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and thus make an impact on the community they serve.
7. REDS - (Serving rag-pickers families and running non-formal education and pre-school centres in the slums) - Due to change in staff they were in need of more training of personnel. However it was interesting to note that the messages they had shared had a very positive response from parents and adolescents.
8. Sanjivini Trust - (Women and child nutrition and health issues) - While taking the messages into their on-going programmes the 2 trainees showed remarkable ability in communication and training methodology and could be used for future LTPC Programmes.
9. MAYA - (Mahila Sanghas, Pre-Schools, Day Care, School for drop-outs and street children and Community Health Programme through their Crèches) - This organisation serves a very large Muslim community and their co-ordinators who are all young dynamic and well qualified in child development were keen to use the "Urdu Calendar". They have plans to go beyond their

initial experience with LTPC and upscale the training to their 84 Pre-School teachers.

10. TRED - (Community Health Programme, Day Care and educational services for Adivasis and Dalith women in the Tribal area) - Their outreach is to 40 to 45 villages and the feedback was very positive. Most of the community including the elders and the mothers were very excited about the Calendar pictures. Though unlettered they were able to keep excellent Parenting messages through their interpretation of the pictures.
11. TREDA - (Serving and rehabilitating rag-pickers and drug abusers) - They have extended LTPC to Kolar which is the main area of their work and it was very interesting to observe how they were able to convey the Parenting messages and values to the parents of drug addicted children - the main message that came out was one of love, concern and the need for care and forgiveness.
12. Community Health Cell (CHC) - (Women and child health in the community) - Much of their involvement in the project through Mr. Rajendran was to help BMRF in the co-ordination).

E. On 8th January 2003 the second review meeting held in Bangalore conducted by Ms. Maya Gaitonde and Ms. Hema Srinivas along with the project partners.

4 points were highlighted:

- The need to print LTPC in Kannada.
- BMRF to initiate a process of Networking on Parenting in order to sustain the Parenting Programme.
- Partner organisations committed to intensify "Parenting training" in the community with those workers already trained during the project.
- BMRF to further empower through training all field workers in the partner organisations as requested.

February - June 2003:

Ms. Hema Srinivas met each field worker or the co-ordinators who took training in the Parenting Programme individually, and undertook a final assessment of the understanding of LTPC, implementation and impact of the Calendar in the community.

- This assessment was carried out with the help of a questionnaire, recommended by Hincks-Dellcrest:
 - a. Understanding of the concept.

- b. How effectively they were able to use it.
 - c. How effectively they were able to go beyond the given messages and visuals to convey Parenting values.
- The participants shared interesting experiences where they have used the Calendar to solve parent's queries and problems.
 - Ms. Hema Srinivas also undertook to observe and guide the training of personnel in some of the organisations.
 - For those who needed workshops for further empowerment, specific dates were set and the project completed by June 2003.

The Experience Of The Parenting Programme Using LTPC In Karnataka

In Karnataka the experience of the "Parenting programme", using the Learning Through Play Calendar was that it was able to reach out to many diverse groups of parents who were in the communities being served by different NGOs.

- While the focus of their work in the community was different, it was interesting to note that:
 - Age of the child was not a constraint to convey the values of the parenting skills. Many field level functionaries effectively used the Calendar pictures or the messages individually to convey a parenting point for even older children.
 - The visuals while international in interpretation, did not seem to be a constraint in dissemination of messages.
 - Individuals benefited from the messages, personally, for their families and for the community they served.
- The field workers and co-ordinators of the community reach out programmes of partner NGOs were either health workers, field staff, pre-school teachers, crèche and day care teachers or institutional care givers.
- Messages were disseminated through workshops, meetings or interventions in their on-going programmes.
- The parents who received messages were those of young children in the homes, pre-school children in crèche and day care, school drop-outs, rag-

pickers, children needing non-formal education, those in shelter homes and rehabilitation programmes and physically challenged children.

- Others who received the messages included women, family members and adolescent girls who are part of the health programmes and Mahila Sanghas, Anganavadi workers and ANM's and women in tribal and rural communities.

Highlights Of The Feedback On LTPC In Karnataka

- Messages have helped both trainees and parents have a better attitude towards child behaviour.
- Closer relationships have been built up and parents are more aware of the psycho-social needs of their children.
- The concept of Rangoli to explain effective stimulation and brain development is most interesting and every morning parents remember what they should do.
- Since LTPC is a holistic programme many health and nutrition problems have also been solved.
- Pictures and messages are simple and clear and help in the understanding of milestones and for the unlettered the pictures themselves give clear-cut, positive Parenting messages.
- Inclusion of fathers has become very easy since the men can see themselves in the Calendar and also understand quite easily how they can interact with their young child.
- Grand parents also feel included in this programme since the pictures are very dynamic.
- The Parenting values expressed are universal and since the messages are coming from the child even the adolescents and elders in the family are interested in them.
- The Parenting values expressed can be used for older children and to create awareness on child rights and needs.

- There is a strong message regarding emotional well being and self-esteem of the child and the SPRUC domains are very easily understood.
- The stories and examples and case studies shared have helped field workers be-friend parents and others in the community.
- Since messages are in Kannada participants and parents are very comfortable and it makes the resource persons very approachable.
- Maybe having Indianised pictures would be a good adaptation of the Calendar.
- The messages of love and concern are very strong and have helped build family relationships.
- Understanding that language development starts from the womb as does brain development, has been a very new learning experience. The importance of the psycho-social and nutritional needs of the pregnant mother having a direct impact on the child is a vital message, which is slowly helping to change the attitudes towards the women.

4. Use Of The Learning Through Play Calendars (Birth – 3 Years and 3 – 6 Years) For Children With High-Risk Birth History – Ms. Usha Ramakrishnan

Rationale For The Study

Children develop their optimum potentials when ALL areas of development are considered and addressed holistically. This includes children with disability with a high-risk birth history.

It is a matter of great concern that special children are kept apart, and their development considered differently, with the focus mainly on the disability, and on "normalising" the child. The child's strengths are not focused on, and overall potentials, are untapped. The subtler areas of the child's development, especially the emotional well being of the child, are all too often least understood and therefore, given scant importance.

Focus of assessments, programme planning, and parent training is typically on the disability of the child and not on the strengths. Children with disability have

an uneven developmental profile, and they are slotted into the lowest level of attainment rating among the various areas of development. Assessment procedures are often complicated, and cumbersome, they mystify the child's condition leaving the child a passive observer while he or she is being assessed, often sapping the child's self-esteem in the bargain.

Programme plans are drawn up to normalise the child despite disability, rather than considering the child's intrinsic abilities, and developmental levels in each domain, the interconnectedness between domains, and optimising them. Parent training focuses on what has to be done, without spelling out the why, which empowers, makes the parent a passive recipient of services given. Parents in turn are under great stress and distress.

Training of trainers focuses on standardised assessments, and programme plans, and looks at the child linearly, using a multi disciplinary approach - where a team is not available, the child loses out.

There is an urgent need to look at special children also, holistically, while assessing them, planning programmes for them and while training parents, and trainers. Birth to 6 years are very important years, in terms of neural plasticity, much can be done in these years to increase overall performance.

The project studied the use of the Learning through Play Calendars to address these issues.

How The Calendar Helps:

- Changes medical model of assessment to functional, family, social model.
- Screens in first page for sensory deficit.
- Helps identify condition.
- Identifies where input that is more detailed is required.
- Compatible with further specific checklists and assessments.
- Helps in programme plan, which can occur in a natural environment.

The Hincks-Dellcrest Learning Through Play Calendar:

- Focuses equally on all areas of development including the vital and least understood sense of self.
- Explains needs from the child's perspective.
- Explains current research findings in simple messages and pictures.
- Is in keeping with the theory of multiple intelligences.
- Explains what, when, how, why, and where, parental support is needed - empowers parent.

- Can be translated into Indian languages.
- Allows for multi-segmentation of developmental profile.
- Allows for INDIVIDUAL profile to emerge with a mix and match of SPRUC for special children.
- Enables attention to be focused appropriately in various segments.

Vidya Sagar:

- Has been working with children and adults for the last 17 years.
- Looks at the child holistically.
- Has pioneered programmes in parent training.
- Focuses on demystification of disability and empowerment, for children with developmental disabilities and their parents.

Team Involved In The Study:

Team of 11 professionals from Vidya Sagar who are:

- Experienced in working with children with special needs.
- Experienced in parent training.
- One professional resource person from Bala Mandir (who is also Vice-Chairperson of Vidya Sagar).

The Project Studied Use Of The Calendar With:

- 100 children and their parents directly.
- Children with high-risk birth history.
- Age groups of 1 month to 9 years.
- Cross disability from profound to mild.
- Training of 150 rehabilitation workers.
- From varied backgrounds, who were experienced in working with children with developmental delay.

The Calendar Was Used For:

- Screening and assessment.
- Programme planning.
- Parent training.
- Training of community-based rehabilitation workers.

The Project Has Generated 100 Case Studies and Studied:

- The efficacy of the tool for children with high-risk birth history.
- How the tool blends with other screening and assessment tools used by Vidya Sagar.
- What adaptations, additions to the tool would make it more effective.

- How best can parent training and programme planning be done with the tool.
- How does the MIX AND MATCH profile work, where does it help.
- What support material is needed along with Calendar for children with high-risk birth history.

Training of 150 rehabilitation workers

The Training has generated feedback on how useful the tool would be in a rural, semi urban setting, and 4 Training Module Packages:

- 1 for fresh CBR workers, 1 for experienced CBR workers, 1 for ancillary staff in special schools and
- 1 for professionals in special schools.

Conditions Covered In Study & Number Of Children In Each Range

CONDITION	NOS	CONDITION
Cerebral palsy	49	Angelman's syndrome
Mental retardation	8	Learning disabilities
Autism, PDD, Aspergers		ADHD
Speech delay		Downs syndrome
High-risk birth history		Hydrocephalus
Developmental delay		Post encephalitis sequelae
Visual impairment + developmental delay	2	Spina Bifida

Number Of Children In Each Age Group

1 month - 1 year: 11	1-2 years: 7	2-3 years: 9	3-4 years: 11	4-5 years: 12	5-6 years: 17
6-7 years: 13	7-8 years: 4	8-9 years: 13	9 years: 3		

Time-Frame-Schedule

<p>June to August 2002 - Setting The Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying team • Sensitising them to the project • Brainstorming on plan of action • Joint assessments in group with Calendar • For 5 children of varying ages and disabilities 	<p>September-October 2002 Getting Ready</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing pre-questionnaire for team • Developing recording tables • Identifying children for study 	<p>November 2002-May 2003 On The Job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using calendar with 100 children + parents <p>For assessment programme planning and parent training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February-presentation in Canada to Dellcrest team • 4 training programs for 150 trainers 	<p>August-December 2003</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collating data, finding answers • Planning further action plan to submit to BMRF • Compiling case studies and training processes • Planning adaptations on Calendar
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Hidden Strengths Of Calendar For Special Populations

- Messages can be framed into questions for assessments.
- 8 pictures at each stage show 8 activities, 8 postures for assessment, programme plan and parent training.
- Available in local languages.
- Both receptive and expressive language can be profiled.
- Both gross and fine motor function can be profiled.
- Can be formatted to make individual profiles, the individual profile allows professionals to work simultaneously on strengths and the disabilities.
- Early warning signs of learning disabilities can be identified and attended to.

Findings - Calendar As Assessment Tool

- Identifies gaps in developmental profile.

- Different recurring SPRUC profiles for different conditions, aids differential diagnosis.
- Assessment holistic, assessment quicker, Calendar ready reckoner.
- Finds hidden strengths in child, refocuses management plan.
- Identifies gaps in development, refocuses management plan.
- Has been used for self-assessment by a child with cerebral palsy.
- The Calendar itself becomes a resource to check child's language development and understanding.
- Programme plan easier and effective, parents attitude changes towards child's potential.
- CBR workers can be trained effectively.
- Useful for transdisciplinary worker as pictures are clear, wordings simple, translations great support.
- Professionals background and attitude important.
- Professional attitudinal change from skepticism to positive acceptance.

As Assessment Tool - Areas Not Covered

- Physical and motor development in detail including assessment of reflexes.
- Specific visual, hearing assessment.
- Detailed language assessment.
- Development of skills in ADLS.

Findings - Calendar For Programme Planning - Positive

- Pictures at each stage give range of activities for hands, which in turn help ADLS.
- Gaps in developmental profile identified in assessment can be given as programme plan.
- Next stage of development in a domain becomes programme plan.
- Each picture and message can be expanded to more activities at that level.
- Activities in Calendar useful for increasing attention span of children with ADHD.
- Activities in Calendar useful to increase child's language skills.
- All 8 pictures and messages in each stage can be used for each area of development.
- Total of 40 ways in which 8 pictures and messages can be used in a stage, multiplied by 14 stages = 560 ways.

As Programme Planning Tool - Areas Not Covered

- Sub steps in motor development and training.
- Sub steps in sensory development and training.
- Sub steps in language development and training.

Parents Reaction To The Calendar

Positive:

- Parents felt less depressed with calendar than with other checklists.
- Attitudinal change towards child, and his/her potential.
- Education, socio-economic background no bar to understanding programme.
- Use it for sibling, and other children in neighbourhood, for stimulation.
- Found pictures and messages easy to understand, language translation helped.

Not Positive:

- When child is more than 8 years old.
- When child is profoundly disabled and SPRUC level is at Birth to 2 months.
- When the parent is depressed.

Study Has Generated: Areas For

- Adaptation of Calendar format to allow for individual profiling for children with high-risk birth history.
- Support material along with Calendar for children with high-risk birth history.

Long Term Benefits Of Use Of Calendar For Special Populations

- Children's TOTAL potential gets addressed.
- Early inclusion.
- Parent empowerment.
- Rehabilitation workers empowered with knowledge and skills.
- Rehabilitation workers use Calendar as assessment programme planning and parent training tool.

5. The Poetry Of Parenting - Dr. S. Anandalakshmy

What is new, that we can say about parenting? Parenting is as ancient as the history of human beings on this earth, or we would not be here, in the 21st Century. And yet it is a perpetually fresh and challenging activity, as each child comes into this world. We are from the species known as *homo sapiens* (wise man) and most of us may need a whole lifetime trying to live up to that label.

Most mammals have young ones that require active parenting for only a fraction of the time that a human baby does. Being at the end of a long line of evolution, the human infant is both vulnerable to neglect or harm and responsive to sensory and interpersonal interaction. It is a truism that the young of the human requires the protection and care of adults for quite a few years. But what may not always be acknowledged is the fact that along with this need for nurturance, there is the exciting potential of the brain and the development of neural pathways. Whatever the genetic endowment, there is "room at the top" for intellectual, artistic and emotional growth.

What we have done in our group at Bala Mandir is to enlarge the definition of "parenting" and to take it beyond the biological bond and the domestic setting. Anyone who plays a nurturant role is a parent. We have found nuns and monks, sannyasis and bachelors, adolescents and Anganwadi workers, doctors and nurses slip easily into the role and definition of parenting persons.

What we have referred to, in other contexts, as custodial care is what many understand as good parenting. That may take the prose of child rearing into account. With the focus on play activities, we move to the poetry of parenting. Anyone who finds taking care of children to be a chore among the mundane tasks that have to be endured and performed is dealing only with the prosaic aspects of the parenting process. Play with the child restores poetry to the lives of adults. Play makes the adult-child interaction a creative exercise.

"Poetry" is clearly a wider field than rhymes that we learn by heart or verses that we cite to pass an examination. It includes a vivid imagination, free-floating fantasy, an artistic perception, the use of the unexpected phrase, flexible boundaries, playfulness, humour and the ability to deal with ambiguity. All these things may be seen to represent the "lunar" aspects of our nature. Not the bright certainty of sunlight, but the marvelous possibilities of the moon!

I came upon a poem cited in A.K. Ramanujan's *Collected Essays*. It is a twelfth Century poem in Sanskrit. It goes thus:

What A Poet Should Know

A poet should learn with his eyes
the form of leaves
he should know how to make
people laugh when they are together
he should know about oceans and mountains
in themselves
and the sun and the moon and the stars
his mind should enter into the seasons
he should go among many people
in many places
and learn their languages

Ksemendra, Kavikanthabharana, verses 10-11
(Merwin and Masson 1977)
Cited in *The Collective Essays of A.K. Ramanujan*
Oxford University Press, 1999.

Let us substitute the word "parent" for the word "poet" and read the lines again. "What the parent should know".

We realise, what a poet should know, a parent should know. She should know a lot more, of course, but how beautifully and concisely has the Indian poet, nine hundred years ago, stated many of the essential characteristics of a good parent. We could, I am sure make up verses two and three, to include other facets of our concept of parenting.

A corollary to good parenting is useful to focus on at this point. Let us consider our parents, our spouses, our children (alternatively, our mentors, our colleagues, our students, our young charges)! They do not own us, neither do we own them. They travel with us for a part of the journey that we call life, putting their trust in us, looking to us for reciprocation, sustaining a give-and-take relationship, which thrives best with love, mutual respect and consideration. If we remove the stout claims of ownership, we become truly "playful" caregivers!

Play serves a variety of functions in the growing child. It is not only the medium of learning and of instruction, as this Calendar demonstrates. It is the curriculum as well as "extra-curricular" activity. In the examination of PLAY, there are no wrong answers!

The Learning Through Play Calendar is full of wise suggestions, but it is not meant to be swallowed as a capsule of good parenting. Rather, each user should absorb the messages and understand the tone in which they are stated and deliver them in her own specific context. Enjoy the process.

6. The "Learning Through Play" Calendar - A Tool For Early Childhood Education - Ms. Prema Daniel

The Calendar " Learning through Play", I have used as a training tool for teacher trainees in Early Childhood Education Programmes. I feel, the need to understand children and child development is essential for teachers of young children. The Calendar therefore helps the teachers with:

1. The knowledge of development of children in all the domains and in all ages and stages of children from birth to 6 years. Provides an understanding of the critical period in children. Helps us to identify when and which positive experiences may be most beneficial in the development of children. Provides an understanding of channelising the children's energy - encouraging the sensory and intellectual development to make learning concrete and the importance of self-esteem of the child. Pictures used to understand the characteristics of young children.
2. It helps teachers to develop skills to provide care and education for the children. It helps the teachers to plan activities to suit the abilities and the ages and stages of the children.

A teacher should be alert, caring, committed to help children stay safe, so children can develop normally in a risk free environment.

- To exercise their curiosity.
- Experience their senses.
- Test their bodies.
- Approach their world in countless different ways.
- Encourage growth of children's self-esteem.
- Their cultural identity.
- Their independence.
- Individual strengths.
- Expand their love for learning.
- Their ability to get along with others.

- And their interest in reaching out to the world. Each picture in the Calendar was taken and as a teacher the activity that could be provided was done.

3. It brings about an attitudinal change in the teacher trainees to understand the abilities of children at each stage of development. Helps envision a new role-breaking away from the old stereotype of the concept that the teacher is the one in control, one who dispenses knowledge and of one who serves as a central figure in any programme to the idea that the central figure is the child. Especially in our society that has grown up on a staple diet of high achievement and where emotion and social development has been incidental the Calendar is definitely a help.

The calendar also helps the teachers in guiding young parents in bringing up their children.

It is a descriptive tool makes learning child development exciting and simple.

7. The Experience Of LTPC At Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram - Ms. P. Ambika

LTPC Training For KG Teachers (2001 - 2002)

The KG teachers of Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram went through an intensive session of understanding LTPC. In many areas, LTPC was a real eye opener.

The session on brain development was truly amazing indeed, a miracle for all of us - as we were taken on a guided tour of the different stages of brain development. It gave us an insight into how, providing the right stimulation, lays the foundation for the way people behave and think for the rest of their lives. We were awed by the responsibility that we shoulder, as teachers, in shaping these little lives when we interact with them.

The different domains of development gave us an insight into how different stimuli are needed to help develop a healthy personality.

The Calendar is a very useful tool, especially when we deal with parents. When we expect parents to give extra attention in any given area, the Calendar helps us to reinforce the need for extra attention. The parents relate better, when we discuss in general about the various milestones to be reached by the child. And, then, come down to specifics in the case of a particular child.

The programme helped us identify the various parenting styles used by us and the parents.

The guidelines given, on how to communicate effectively, have been very useful in our interaction with parents.

The ability to manage time and help others manage their time is a very important skill, which we learnt during the programme. It has helped us, teachers, to organise ourselves better and make parents aware about time management.

An important facet of the programme was the session on how to communicate with the parents and how to handle different situations, which may arise during interactions with them.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences has made us aware of the innate ability within each child in different areas.

The session on Learning Disabilities helped us identify children like slow learners, dyslexics and hyperactive children - with specific learning challenges. We were also given guidelines on how to handle these children.

Finally, the case studies done, enabled us to put down on paper the different inputs, which were given. We understood the different learning patterns, identified children with learning problems and learnt how to deal with them.

The Joy Of Parenting Programme For Parents Of The KG Section

Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram, along with Bala Mandir Research Foundation, conducted the 'Joy of Parenting' programme for the parents of the KG Section.

The response from the parents was very good. They were very eager to know more and the sessions were extremely interactive and informative.

Parents were amazed at the different ways in which they could help their children improve and develop a rounded personality. They were very impressed by the videotapes played for them. And they were very forthright in their comments and discussion.

Parents appreciated the Calendar and its ability to help them understand SPRUC(E) and guide them ably in providing positive inputs for their ward's all-round development. They appreciated the different milestones that were illustrated in a simple manner. They were able to identify their own ward's progress through the Calendar.

They were very impressed by the suggested activities for children with different behaviour problems like temper tantrums, thumb sucking, bed-wetting, etc.

They enjoyed the sessions so thoroughly, that they wanted more sessions to discuss their personal difficulties with their children. They were convinced that what they had experienced was only a small part of the multi-faceted role of parenting.

8. Indian Council For Child Welfare (ICCW), Tamil Nadu - Ms. Usha Raghavan

The Council has been training child care workers since 1962.

1. Pre-Service Training Programme.
 - a. One-year certificate course in ECCE.
 - b. Diploma in ECCE - A one-year correspondence course - IGNOU.
2. MLTC for ICDS supervisors.
3. Short-term need based training programmes for NGOs and Government.

Audio-visual medium as a source of learning.

The "Learning Through Play" Calendar was introduced in the training programmes with the following factors borne in mind:

1. The trainees should be able to identify with the situations presented at each stage of the development.
2. The trainees need to be oriented to the content of the Calendar before viewing and their attention focused and directed towards an essential component of child rearing or development contained in the Calendar to be viewed.
3. Viewing should be followed by thorough participatory discussion.
4. The entire sequences within it may need to be reviewed to clarify observations and inferences.

Expectation Of Trainees:

1. To gain more knowledge about children.
2. To learn new methods of teaching which they could implement.
3. How and what to communicate to parents.
4. To learn how to impart formal teaching in reaching, writing and numbers to young children.
5. How to handle behavioural problems in children.
6. To emphasise the importance of providing for the health, hygiene and proper nutrition of children.
7. To help mothers/fathers to be relaxed and happy in their interactions with children.

Planning The Session:

Sensitising and educating adults who are responsible for the rearing of children. Initially we planned to begin with training crèche workers, engaged in caring for infants. However this was extended to supervisors of ICDS projects.

Training Procedures:

Role-play, simulation exercises and assignments were the methodologies followed in the training programmes.

Assessment Of Knowledge, Skills And Attitudes

At the commencement of the session, pre-test performance was introduced in these 3 areas.

Knowledge:

The areas assessed were

1. Milestones of development - Children's abilities and inabilities during these stages.
2. Children's needs in infancy, toddlerhood and early childhood.
3. The adult's role as facilitation skills.

Skills:

The areas assessed were

1. Handling children's feelings and emotions.
2. Handling developmental problems in children at each stage.
3. Utilising all available resources (people, materials, time).

Attitudes:

The areas assessed were

1. Towards self.

2. Towards one's vocation, children and parents.

Methodology

Multi-method approach was used.

1. Viewing the *Calendar*, stage by stage, focusing on specific aspects of child development.
2. Viewing followed by discussion.
3. Questionnaires consisting of work sheets followed by big and/or small group discussions. This enabled us to assess the knowledge level and the skills and attitudes of the participants towards themselves, their vocation and others.
4. Exposure to a range of resource persons from the field of child care and education.
5. Role Play and simulation exercises.
6. Assignments based on the day's inputs. Assignments were meant to encourage thinking and application of the inputs received.

Feedback From Trainers

1. There was a noticeable change in the teacher's interactions with parents. They showed willingness to listen to them and tried to answer their questions, whereas earlier they used to either ignore parents or send them away.
 2. Teachers were patient with children who cried on arrival. The teachers tried to pacify children and get them interested in staying on and participating in the activities.
 3. The teachers had become aware of the use of waste and low cost materials for providing learning experiences to children. They were collecting and storing such items for a variety of uses.
 4. Certain equipment (simple musical instruments) that had not been used earlier were now brought out for songs and games.
- The training experience on Parenting had been satisfying and rewarding for the trainees.

Evaluation By Participants

Information on the response of the trainees to the session was obtained through a questionnaire. They were allowed to fill it out on their own time during the week. This was at their request as they wanted time to think over the questions carefully before submitting their completed questionnaire.

The responses presented as follows:

1. The usefulness of the Calendar as a training tool. The greatest benefit derived was in the area of knowledge and understanding about children.
2. The Calendar brought about clarity in understanding how children actually develop from one stage to the next. This included an understanding of the child's developmental milestones. Learning via this medium helped them to remember whatever they saw, better than by listening to talks.
3. The needs of children at each stage, as well as the role of adults, were understood. For example, a toddler's need is to become autonomous and the Calendar showed many ways in which independence can be encouraged.
4. Learning took place about a variety of age-appropriate activities that can be provided for children. The importance of the parent's role in providing such meaningful experiences for children was understood.
5. The advantages children gain in group care became apparent, such as being cared for by father, grand parents, having opportunities for greater interaction and enjoying the benefit of more play materials and activities.
6. The realisation that learning is constantly taking place in children. Every experience is a learning experience for them.
7. Discussions that followed the viewing of pictures were particularly helpful in clarifying ideas and misconceptions.

Suggestions:

1. More sessions should be allotted for practical field work, e.g. contacting parents in the community.
2. There is a need for more opportunities for greater interaction between trainers and trainees and among the trainees.
3. Revision and discussion on all the stages.
4. Regular refresher training programmes.

In conclusion, the trainers felt confident that this experience in training women engaged in the care and education of young children, was rewarding for all concerned.

9. Bala Mandir Research Foundation's Partnership With Indian Council for Child Welfare, Tamil Nadu (April 2002 - March 2003) - Ms. Lakshmi Gopal

The Learning Through Play Calendar (LTPC) is a child and parent friendly tool.

BMRF experienced this through their own experience of providing awareness on good childcare in their own Crèches. It was felt that the LTPC would have far reaching effects. It was against this background that BMRF identified Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW); an organisation dealing with Childcare and having their own crèches in various parts of the country. Thus came the partnership of BMRF & ICCW, a partnership to spread the messages of positive parenting practices through crèche workers to parents in the community.

Project Objectives:

- To equip the crèche worker with adequate knowledge, attitude and skills on parenting through LTPC.
- To enable them with adequate skills to interact with parents effectively.
- To create a congenial atmosphere in crèches and improve skills in dealing with the children.

Project Sites:

BMRF & ICCW chose the following areas in Tamil Nadu to spread the messages of LTPC to parents of children attending the ICCW Crèches:

- Chennai - Urban.
- Vellore - Semi-urban.
- Usilampatti - Rural.

Scenario Of The Areas Chosen:

- **Chennai:**
Typical urban city with slum dwellings. Both the parents go out to work. There is acute poverty, alcoholism and drug addiction prevalent here. Parents are influenced by TV and other distractions of city life.
- **Vellore:**
Predominantly Muslim population and hence family planning is not practiced. Parents are all Beedi workers and there is a heavy percentage of child labour in this area.
- **Usilampatti:**
Here, mothers are partly employed in the fields. There was a heavy incident of female infanticide in this area, which has reduced greatly with the intervention of ICCW.

Project Schedule:

- A 3-day Training Programme was conducted by BMRF Resource persons in co-ordination with ICCW trainers to 67 crèche workers in April and May 2002.
- Meeting with ICCW co-ordinators regarding project details in June 2002.

- These trained workers shared child-age appropriate Parenting messages based on the LTPC with parents of children in their crèche through Home Visits and at parent meetings.
- 1st review meeting at crèche project sites in September 2002 to assess:
 - Understanding of LTPC by crèche workers.
 - Extent to which workers have been able to share messages with parents through Home Visits and parent meetings.
 - Gaps identified by them in the field and provide solutions.
 - Submission of socio-economic survey formats for all the crèches by ICCW.

Training and Methodology Adopted

BMRF resource person Ms. Lakshmi Gopal, along with ICCW resource persons who had been trained by BMRF on the LTPC, undertook a 3-day training programme in April - May 2002 for all the crèche workers in the 3 project areas.

Topics Covered In The Training:

- Brain Development.
- Child Development.
- Power of Play.
- Communication Skills.
- LTPC Birth - 6 Years.

Methods Used:

- Lecture Demonstrations.
- Participatory methodology with discussions.
- Role-plays.
- Games.
- Self-learning and self-awareness.

Observations After The LTPC Training

Observations were made based on daily feedback of the participants. A few were read out to find out how much of the subject they have understood. Some of the points that have made a deep impact on the participants:

- That they will take the Calendar during Home Visits and use it in mothers meetings.
- Importance of pregnancy and brain development were understood.
- The need to talk more to children in their Centres.

- They learnt how to communicate with parents.
- Importance of involving fathers in Parenting was understood.
- How to encourage the child and provide stimulation through play.
- "Will use what we have learnt wherever and whenever we get a chance".

LTPC - ICCW Training Programme

- The participants of the ICCW Training Programme are all experienced child care workers with 3 to 15 years experience of working with children in the age group of 2 to 6 years.
- They have all undergone the Bala Sevika Course.
- There is a regular in-service training that is conducted yearly by ICCW. However it was noted that the main stress is on activities WHAT rather than on HOW. The LTPC Programme brings to the fore the emotional needs of the child and adds the new dimension to the workers' interaction with the child.
- The gap in knowledge if at all is in the understanding of the child Birth - 2 years, which the crèche worker experiences in her personal life. Very few if not no children in this age group enter the crèches.

While dealing with the Calendar 2 methods were used.

The first was to allow each participant to look at individual pictures and messages and explain what they felt, with necessary assistance from resource persons.

The second method was to have a game or activity for each stage and help trainees to focus on the particular stage and highlight the learning Parenting points.

- In each method the trainees were able to catch very easily the core learning points.
- The feedback in each case clearly indicated that those trained generally fell into 3 categories:
 - a. Those who could give the message as such.
 - b. Those who could go beyond the picture and message.
 - c. Those who could connect it to Parenting values and every day life.

In all cases it was interesting to note that except for very few pictures and messages, the crèche worker found LTPC a very simple tool.

Distribution Of Formats & Collection From The Workers For Assessment - May - December 2002

An Assessment was made that the workers have understood the project and conveyed the messages appropriately to parents.
Each worker met with 25 to 30 parents.

First Reports After The Field Visits Of The Crèche Workers After The Use Of The Calendar In Their Home Visits And Mothers Meetings - Chennai, Vellore and Usilampatti

- Parents showed a lot of interest when the crèche workers spoke about positive parenting practices.
- Mothers were motivated when they felt bad that they did not spend enough time with the children.
- Crèche workers found the Calendar pictures self-explanatory and were found useful even with the unlettered public.
- They had used the domain Communication well, as most of their complaints were that the children were not able to communicate. It was a challenge for them to get them to talk.
- Children were not provided with activities and this was pointed to the parents. They were tied so their movements were restricted.
- Mothers did not let their children play in water or sand. Significance of play as an important part of the children's lives for learning was pointed to the parents.
- Parents were shown the Calendar pictures to explain the importance of talking to children, as the children are not listened to.
- It would appear that the parents in rural areas were open to suggestions and advice on parental care.
- Mothers were spending most of their time watching TV in urban areas.
- There is a lot of husband and wife fights. Violence is the order of the day in urban and semi-urban areas.
- Problems faced in urban and semi-urban areas were extreme poverty, husband and wife fights, poor hygiene, drug addiction, gender discrimination and some wrong parenting practices.
- The areas where the crèche workers had to visit were mostly ridden with extreme poverty and children lived in unhygienic conditions in urban and semi-urban areas.
- Children were not given freedom to play. They were also curbed from using household articles for play. This was tackled well by showing the appropriate Calendar picture and the additional message.

A Review Was Conducted To Get Feedback Of Their Actual Experiences With The Parents In The Field As Also On The Effectiveness Of The Calendar - December 2002

Information Gathered During The Review:

Meeting with the same parents after 6 months and through discussion and filling up of a feedback format, assessing parental understanding and internalising of the messages.

There were indicators to show that there was a gradual increase in awareness and understanding among the parents.

It was found that the interaction with the parents mostly depended on the ability of the crèche worker in making the parents realise and understand the issues to be tackled.

- Some were able to go beyond the Calendar and give extra inputs.
- There were some crèche workers who were able to give a clear picture and use it effectively.
- There were yet another group of crèche workers who could just deliver an outline of the parenting messages.

Review Of The Crèche Workers After Home Visits By The Resource Person

An awareness on their parenting role has been created in men. Fathers' role has been emphasised repeatedly by the crèche workers. After repeated interactions menfolk try and participate and share the workload at home. They also drop children off at the crèche and spend more time with their children.

Review In Vellore:

Interaction with a few parents by the resource person showed that parents seem to be aware of the parenting messages.

Definitely a dent has been made. They knew what to do and what not to do.

But the rest seem to have only absorbed the outline of the Calendar messages but not the details.

From what they have spoken it appears as though most of them seem to have made a change in the attitude of the caregiver and the family.

Review In Usilampatti:

- Parents were able to understand the Calendar messages.
- A major complaint from crèche workers is parents wanting the child to write. This was efficiently tackled using the Calendar.
- Except for a couple of areas gender bias is absent in these places.

- Crèche workers seem to have made a change in the outlook of men towards parenting and their involvement in household activities.
- Problems tackled and resolved by the crèche workers were mainly husband and wife fights, beating children, children using bad language and parents wanting their children in the crèche to write alphabets.
- There were a number of cases where 2 year old children were not able to speak. Efforts were made by the crèche worker to get them to talk and also succeeded in their job.

Review In Chennai:

- It was found that all the crèche workers had to deal with very nearly the same economic strata of society based on their geographic location within the city.
- Most of the women they dealt with were unlettered and had to be shown the pictures in the Calendar. There were of course a few houses that were clean and the elders took an active part in the development of the child. Yet another pocket where the slum is full of alcoholics and drug addicts.
- Problems faced in these areas were extreme poverty, husband and wife fights, poor hygiene, drug addiction, gender discrimination and some wrong parenting practices. Crèche workers had to convey the parenting messages against all odds.
- An awareness on their parenting role has been created in men. Fathers' role has been emphasised repeatedly by the crèche workers. After repeated interactions menfolk try and participate and share the workload at home. They also drop children off at the crèche and spend more time with their children.
- Effort has been made by the crèche worker to create an awareness on good nurturing and positive parenting practices. These were very well explained with the use of the Calendar.
- Some of the crèche workers have not only grasped the parenting points but also knew how to use it efficiently by connecting the Calendar picture to the instances happening at home.

Some Of The Observations

- Usilampatti and Chennai seem to have taken the Calendar messages beyond 3 - 6 to adolescents and have spoken on values, importance of education and hygiene.
- They were able to get the adolescents to interact with the children in the crèche.

- A definite positive change has come about in the attitude of men in all the three areas.
- Marital discord and family planning issues had to be dealt with in a big way in Vellore.
- Similarly, it was pointed out to the parents the negative aspects of child labour in Vellore. Children were born without spacing gaps. This problem was absent in Chennai and Usilampatti according to the assessment.
- Effort has been made by the crèche workers to create an awareness on good nurturing and positive parenting practices. These were very well explained with the use of the Calendar.
- Most of the crèche workers have not only grasped the parenting points but also knew how to use it efficiently by connecting the Calendar picture to the instances happening at home.

LTPC & ICCW - Bala Sevika Training Programme

The partnership between ICCW and BMRF started in 1999 on an intervention with the Learning through Play Calendar (LTPC) - Parenting Training Programme into the on-going Bala Sevika Training Programme (Early Childhood Care and Education).

In 1999, Ms. Hema Srinivas undertook the training of the Bala Sevikas followed
 In 2000 by Ms. Lakshmi Gopal and
 In 2001 by ICCW resource persons monitored by Ms. Lakshmi Gopal.

With this background of partnership it was decided between the two organisations to include the Parenting Programme Intervention into the on-going Bala Mandir - Hincks-Dellcrest LTPC Trainers Training Project.

The stages of the partnership from July - December 2002 would involve:

- a. Administering the participant profile to trainees.
- b. Training sessions on LTPC to be undertaken by the ICCW training personnel.
- c. Interacting with parents by individual trainees.
- d. Report on the use and efficacy of LTPC during their field work by the trainees.
- e. Administering a post-training feedback.

The feedback from this intervention would involve:

- a. Detailed reporting on the training methodology used by ICCW trainers.
- b. Editing and enhancing of the supportive materials that has been prepared for the LTPC.

In August 2002, the LTPC Birth - 3 Years was used to enhance the theoretical and practical teaching in the area of Child Development and stimulation activities, and the LTPC tool was extremely useful even as a review of the topic which was done over 9 sessions.

In particular, for these early stages of Child Development the following visuals were found to be useful for teaching:

- Brain Development - Kolam concept.
- Child Development - A series of stairs.
- Power of Play - SPRUC visual.

The LTPC 2 - 6 was utilised in the same manner as Birth - 2 years and implemented in October - November 2002.

Regarding The Parenting Component Of LTPC

- The Parenting concept was built into the review process itself.
- The child care workers being trained are generally young unmarried girls who are being prepared to run crèches, where the majority of the children are in the age group 2 - 6 years and would have many opportunities to interact with parents.

On 7th and 8th January 2003, a complete review of the trainees was undertaken and along with the feedback, the following will help to formulate the training module:

- a. A list of games used by ICCW resource persons.
- b. The pre and post-training feedback formats.
- c. Detailed assessment of the individual trainees.
- d. A report giving details of parent interaction by trainees.

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