

"Non-profit organization providing assistance on education, vocational training and income generation to rural and physically challenged children and youth in India since 1991"



Ashraya Project Terra Firma A Funding Prospectus

The Touch. It is a fortuitous graze that kindles the fires of creation as poles waltz in the field of life. A Barber's scissors clipping our nerves. A Doctor's scope racing our pulse. Granny's cold palms frosting our blood. A blind girl's fingers sculpting our eyes. Currents of society sizzling down the spine of man, the loner. A



stranger's eye waking up the natives from their hearths and the first monsoon drop subliming with joy in a flash. The Touch. It is a spark plug that ignites civilizations and liberates the I. This is the story of a few such sparks that were willfully consumed in their own flames, of children whose smiles put our chocolates to shame. As their



curiosity woke up the books from deep slumber in our libraries, set Newton's laws into motion in our science labs and stroked apples out of still life in our art studios. This is their story. And a call for you to come and be part of their story, to touch and be touched doubly in return.

1. Proposal Intent: ASHRAYA has been running Project Terra Firma comprising of complementary-skill based experiential programs in rural higher primary schools in Karnataka, India since 2008, with a current footprint of 10 full-fledged programs at 9 higher primary schools. We have shown great success in the execution of these programs and in imparting valuable life skills to students that will differentiate them in their years ahead. We have expanded, stabilized and refined program content, systems and processes and earned the trust of the people we work with (block education officers, school teachers and admin staff, students and their parents as well as the community at large) to a point where the "Arivina Aramane" name (the Kannada title we have given to our initiative) has become well known in the project area we operate in. **This document provides an overview of our programs and seeks funding for continued operations in 2020-21 and beyond at the current level of operations (without growth).**

2. Introduction to ASHRAYA: ASHRAYA is a 25 year old US-based NGO providing assistance to rural and physically challenged students in India in education, vocational training and income generation. We have 501(c)3 status from IRS (tax ID 52-1791311) and are a registered trust in India with 12A and 80G Certificates (BKIV 779 /13.14). We are also registered on Guidestar with a gold standard. We have disbursed funds worth \$400K to date to 30+ organizations all over India. Organizations supported



to date include NAB (Bombay), NAB (Chennai), BPA (Ahmedabad), Mobility India (Bangalore), and MP Blind Welfare Association (Indore). We run our organization with zero overheads (all overhead costs are fully absorbed by the

founders); and our big differentiation to date has been hands-on involvement in project content creation, execution and management as opposed to being a funder. Please follow these links to our website for overview information on ASHRAYA: <http://www.ashraya-usa.org/ashraya-overview/>.

3. Introduction to Project Terra Firma: ASHRAYA started **Project Terra Firma** in 2008 when we, the founders were stationed in India on a personal work assignment. Our goal was to take up a large scale initiative covering a single area in which ASHRAYA could be the prime executor as opposed to being a funding agency for other NGOs. We intended



to take up an area (educational focus and geographical location) that was scalable, repeatable and would have a high impact on a large number of beneficiaries. We selected Hanur Taluk in Karnataka since it is primarily local (140 Kms from Bangalore) with very few NGOs active in the area. In Dec 2008, we embarked on Project Terra Firma in partnership with the BEO (Block Education Officer) of Hanur Taluk. By the end of 2019-20, we have completed six key expansion phases of this initiative in Hanur Taluk and brought this initiative to a stable and repeatable state. We have focused 100% of our funding and activities on this initiative and have stopped funding other projects (of 3rd party agencies) since 2008.



Project Terra Firma currently consists of libraries named **Arivina Aramane** (meaning a “Palace of Knowledge” in Kannada) at 9 higher primary schools (Kannur, Kempayyana Hatti, Ramapura, Cowdalli, Managalli, Hanur, Ajjipura, Shagya and Lokkanahalli); along with **art programs, science clubs, book of the month and drama clubs, story writing programs, computer clubs, MLL activity-based learning, all-rounder and GROWBY learning level mentoring programs**. From 2008 to 2010, we piloted all programs



(library, art and science) in one model school (Kannur HPS). In 2011, we started libraries in 5 more schools. In 2012, we started libraries in 3 more schools and expanded the art program to 6 schools. In 2013, we expanded the science program to 6 schools. In 2015, we started the book



of the month, story writing and GROWBY learning level mentoring program in 6 schools. In 2017, we expanded the art, science, book of the month, story writing and GROWBY mentoring programs to all 9 schools; and in 2018, we added the computer club and activity-based learning programs.

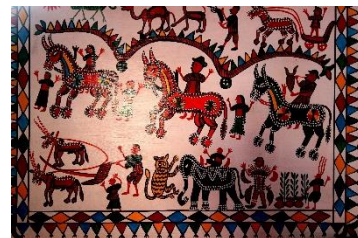
ASHRAYA has spent ~\$250K to date on this initiative and our **current running annual operating budget is \$22K**. We have invested in a stable, reliable and passionate staff (**total staff of 16 members**) that is responsible for the establishment and operations of our programs. We have 9 fulltime librarians; a science teacher who runs the science club; an art teacher who runs our art program; 2 Kannada teachers who run our book of the month club and GROWBY mentoring program; a drama teacher, a project coordinator, a project advisor/lead and an independent 3rd party auditor. Over **3,000 students** benefit our initiative every year. We culminate every year with our annual day (**Leonardo Vinci Day**) in which 600 best students from the 9 schools participate in competitions related to our programs. We follow this with final practical exams leading to program certification.



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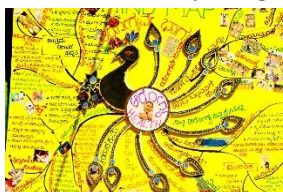
All videos related to our program activities and main events can be found at our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCp-yoRI1L57sfwgjUq3LQJA>

4. Program Descriptions: Our **libraries** have bright color environments with murals from ethnic Indian art (Worli & Pithora) painted by our art teacher who is an acclaimed local artist from Kollegal (a local big town). Each library has 600+ Books covering all subjects including lending and reference books; subscriptions to magazines and newspapers; educational and fun game kits. Our libraries are not just establishments but actively run programs. We



use the GROWBY classification scheme for books as a framework to improve learning levels. We classify all students at the beginning of the year into various GROWBY levels and track progress over the course of the year (through 4 tests conducted every 2 months). We have two library periods for each standard (III to VIII) per week during which our librarians aid the students in selecting the right books to read based on their interest. Students are expected to write a one pager on what they learnt from the books when they return the books to the library. The librarians also conduct various competitions such as newspaper quizzes; book-based dramas; speed reading and "change the story" competitions. We link books to the school curriculum and aid the students in research projects related to their class work. Students are issued library cards and we track book usage and readership throughout the school year.

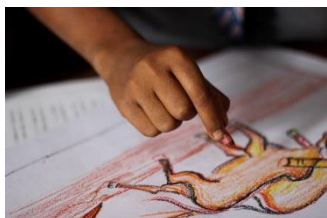
In our **MLL activity-based program**, we have developed simple activities around specific MLLs (minimum learning levels defined by the government) and link them to select story books already available in our library. MLLs are chosen



from various areas such as math, physics, math, environment and society. Our librarians train the 20 students selected for this program (per school) on conducting activities related one MLL per week (30 MLLs per year). The students are also trained on creating and submitting mind maps of various types on the MLL.



In our **art program**, we select the top 20 artistically inclined students per school through a drawing test. We provide art kits to each student as part of induction into the program. The art teacher conducts one class every week; covering



the following modules through the school year: sketching and shading, charcoal, still life, water colors and acrylics, landscapes and portraits. All students maintain their own art portfolio which is graded at the end of each module by the art teacher. We take the students on 2 school trips per year to "encounter with nature" and to the art museum in Mysore. The



best art students are "commissioned" to paint murals in the schools they study in. We also send our best art students to art competitions in nearby cities such as Mysore and Bangalore.

In our **science clubs**, we select the top 20 science students per school through a science test. We provide science kits to each student as part of induction into the program. The science teacher conducts one lab class every week; covering the following modules through the school year: Air, Matter, Light, Density, Magnets, Pressure, Heat and Combustion. We take the students on 2 school trips per year to the science museum and planetarium in Mysore and Bangalore. The students also conduct small science projects ("Arvind Gupta" science experiments) on their own with minimal teacher guidance. In the second half of the school year, the students conduct



hypotheses-based open-ended projects in which they start with formulating hypotheses around a provided topic, followed by experimental design, conducting the experiments and collecting the data, processing the data to confirm/refute the hypotheses and forming final conclusions. All students maintain lab reports in which they record their lab work and

hypotheses and forming final conclusions. All students maintain lab reports in which they record their lab work and

are graded for all experiments conducted through the school year. We send our best science students to science fair competitions in nearby cities such as Mysore and Bangalore.

In our **book of the month clubs**, we select the top 20 students per school based on GROWBY scores and library readership levels. The Kannada teacher selects one book every month and distribute copies to all students to read.



These students then fill questionnaires that seek their thoughts and opinions about the book. They congregate every month to participate in the club meeting during which they participate first in a discussion around the book followed by 1:1 debates, character enactment, and attempts made to change



also

the storyline. In the last 3 years, our book of the month club has used famous plays (by Shakespeare and local writers such as Girish Karnad) so that it has segued nicely into a **drama club** in which the same students enact the plays with their own written scripts, as trained by the drama teacher.

In our **story writing program** intended to inspire creativity around the locally cultural milieu, students, the students from the book of the month and drama clubs write stories every month around theme such as justice, friendship, love



and doubt. Students are taught to write stories using a structure around character building, themes, contexts, settings, conflicts/dilemmas, resolutions and twists. Students are asked to write stories from their own environment and develop characters around people they know and meet. Every alternate month, students



also write stories in which the context is provided in detail and the students are asked to complete the story in a “what happens next” format.

In our **computer club**, we teach students how to operate and use the computer and internet in their day to day school activities and projects. The program has the following main modules: Benefits of computers



and internet, windows operating system, MS Word, MS Excel, MS Power Point, Email, Internet Browsing and Search. The students also conduct projects during which they prepare power point presentations around special themes (e.g. water, tourism) and



present them to teachers like real life pitches. They also work on projects in which they use all modules in practical contexts (e.g. building and presenting a project plan to start a restaurant).

We try our best to reduce student overlap across all our above programs at a given school so as to increase impact



and coverage. However, we do have allow select students who have exhibited diverse interests and skills to participate in all programs (<5% in each school). Out of these, we select the top 2 students per school (20 across all schools) to participate in our **all-rounder program** which sits at the top of our program pyramid. In this program, these select students participate in integrated projects that allow them to exhibit all the skills



related to our programs. For example, they could write a story and embellish the story with their own art work. They could conduct a science project on the periodic table, draw out the periodic table, enter data on all the elements on the computer and solve some simple math exercises on them, write stories treating some elements as characters, and act out these characters.

At the other end of the learning spectrum, our **GROWBY mentoring program** focuses on the bottom 20 students per school based on GROWBY levels in 3 batches through the school year. The Kannada teachers then conduct active mentoring/coaching classes for these students using established learning level improvement techniques that transitions them slowly from alphabets to words to phrases to sentences to paragraphs, with the goal of moving the students up by at least two GROWBY levels within two months (per batch).

Thus, in each of the 9 higher primary schools which are on our programs, we have ~300 students who use our library; out of which 100 (20 x 5) students in the MLL activities, art, science, book of the/drama story writing club and computer club programs; and 60 students who go through the GROWBY mentoring program per year. Thus, we have ~1,400 students participating in our programs, and 1,600 more students using just our library every year. And finally to round up our programs, we publish a bimonthly newsletter in which we publish the best art work, science projects and stories submitted by students in our programs. We actively collect data about our programs (student GROWBY levels, library attendance and readerships, art and science project attendance and scores) and publish project monitoring dashboards every 3 months which are presented to the school principals and the local block education officer (BEO). We have an independent auditor (Shyam & Co.) from Bangalore come and audit our finances (expenditure) and program progress every month.



Our year ends with the annual day (**Leonardo Da Vinci day**) in which select students from each school (600 students) participate in various live competitions related to all our programs. Each school also exhibits its best work from various programs during the school year in "display booths". Awards are finally given to the winners of the various live competitions, best booths and the best students (based on year-end scores) by the judges and chief guests.



Please follow the following links to watch interesting videos about our programs:

- Annual day (Leonardo Da Vinci) 2019-20: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBPSr9fQJw&t=8s>
- Year-ending science projects 2019-20: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqMxYkyCH0k&t=30s>
- Mural painting at Shagya HPS Jan 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFES6kMXVxk>
- Introduction to ASHRAYA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIFVmrCJ398>
- All-rounder project Feb 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MESS4zK8_jo&t=9s
- Parent-teacher meeting Mar 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAnGJYEd5Ss&t=453s>
- Art portrait competition Dec 2019: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6H_lpaEJF0
- Mind maps created in MLL program 2019-20: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxc2nzXoHT8>
- Year-ending certification event 2018-19: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zy1-wcYwG1k&t=1s>
- All-rounder student profile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTAgnzcMzEA&t=2s>
- Book the month program profile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7tnBFQdGds>
- Remedial program profile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmRqapdU9cw>
- Best play of the year 2018-19: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_BC72KVOHg&t=1s

- Select students that are best fit for each program, in collaboration with school teachers
- Lock-in class periods for our programs with the school principals that do not clash with core classes
- Conduct periodic audits (monthly) on program progress by an independent 3rd party auditor
- Have a full-time librarian in the libraries who can coordinate all program activities, conduct quarterly GROWBY tests and ensure that students attend all programs

5. Annual Operating Budget: After sustained growth from 2012-13 to 2019-20 year upon year, we expect to run Project Terra Firma in the school year 2020-21 at its current state of operations without any growth from 2019-20 except for the addition of the drama club in 4 schools. The 2020-21 annual budget are made of the following work streams:

- Running existing libraries + MLL programs (20 students per school)
- Running book of the month + story writing + drama clubs (20 students per school)

- c. Running GROWBY mentoring programs (20 students per school x 3 batches per year)
- d. Running art programs (20 students per school)
- e. Running science clubs (20 students per school)
- f. Running computer clubs (20 students per school)
- g. Cross-program running expenditure across all schools (e.g. project advisor and coordinator, audits, annual day event, local trips to buy materials)

The tables below show the overview and details of continuing to run Project Terra Firma in 2020-21 and beyond. We expect the total expenditure for 2020-21 to be ~\$21.5K, as compared to ~\$21.9K in 2019-20 due to retention of the same level of operations and the depreciation of the rupee from Rs. 67 per \$ in 2019-20 to Rs. 75 per \$ in 2020-21.

ASHRAYA Project Terra Firma 2020-21 Budget Overview		
Rupee to Dollar Conversion Rate	75.0	
No. of Schools	9	
Salary Increase from 2019-20	5%	
No. of Salary Months	10.5	
Expenditure Items	Total across Schools	
	Rs	\$
1. Running Existing Libraries + MLL Program (20 Students) + Book of the Month Clubs /Story Writing Program/Drama Club (20 Students per School) + GROWBY Mentoring Programs (60 Students per School)	739,763	9,864
2. Running Art Programs (20 Students per School)	165,000	2,200
3. Running Science Clubs (20 students per School)	167,070	2,228
4. Running Computer Clubs (20 Students per School)	146,817	1,958
5 Cross-Program Expenditure (across all Schools)	393,583	5,248
Total 2020-21 Expenditure	1,612,232	21,496

ASHRAYA Project Terra Firma 2020-21 Budget Details						
Expense Parameter	Unit	Per School			Total across Schools	
		Units per School	Unit Rate (Rs)	Costs (Rs)	No. of Schools	Costs (Rs)
1. Running Existing Libraries + MLL Program (20 Students) + Book of the Month Clubs /Story Writing Program/Drama Club (20 Students per School) + GROWBY Mentoring Programs (60 Students per School)						
1.1 Incremental Books (Replacements)	Per Book	100	50	3,500		31,500
1.2 Librarian Salary (One per School)	Per Month	10.5	4,410	46,305		416,745
1.3 Kannada Teacher Salary for Book of the Month Club, Story Writing & GROWBY Mentoring Program	Per Month	10.5	1,482	15,558	9	140,018
1.4 Drama Teacher Salary (4 Schools Only)	Per Month	10.5	2,000	21,000		84,000
1.5 Materials for Library MLL Program + Book of the Month Club + Story Writing Program + Drama Club	Per Student per Year	100	75	7,500		67,500
Total Library Ops; Mentoring Program; Book of the Month, Story Writing & Drama Clubs; & MLL Program Expenditure	In Rupees			93,863		739,763
2. Running Art Programs (20 Students per School)						
2.1 Materials for Art Program	Per Student per Year	20	250	5,000		40,000
2.2 Art Teacher Salary	Per Month	10.5	1,250	13,125	8	105,000
2.3 Art Mural Painting Projects (2 per Year)	Lump Sum	1	10,000	10,000		20,000
Total Art Program Expenditure	In Rupees			28,125		165,000
3. Running Science Clubs (20 students per School)						
3.1. Module Material and Lab Reports	Per Student per Year	20	200	4,000		32,000
3.2 Science Club Teacher Salary	Per Month	10.5	1,418	14,884	8	119,070
3.3 Science Projects	Per Student per Year	20	100	2,000		16,000
Total Science Club Expenditure	In Rupees			20,884		167,070
4. Running Computer Clubs (20 Students per School)						
4.1. incremental Laptops (Need to add to 2 Laptops to Current Stock of 4 Laptops)	Per Laptop	1	15,000	15,000	8	30,000
4.2 Computer Club Teacher Salary	Per Month	10.5	1,295	13,602	8	108,817
4.3 Material to Run the Program	per Student per Year	20	50	1,000		8,000
Total Computer Club Expenditure	In Rupees			29,602		146,817
5 Cross-Program Expenditure (across all Schools)						
5.1 Project Area Coordinator Salary	Per Month	10.5	8,400			88,200
5.2 Project Advisor Salary (Part Time)	Per Audit	10.5	5,145			54,023
5.3 Auditor from Bangalore (Part Time)	Per Audit	6.0	7,560			45,360
5.4 Year-ending Certification Exam and Award Ceremony	Per School	1.0	2,000		9	18,000
5.5 HM Meetings & Parent-Teacher Days	Per Year	2.0	4,000			8,000
5.6 Annual Day Event	Once per Year	1	175,000			175,000
5.7 Local Trips by Project Coordinators (to Buy Materials)	Per Month	10.0	500			5,000
Total Cross-Program Expenditure	In Rupees					393,583
Total Expenditure	In Rupees					1,612,232
	In \$					21,496

6. Key success factors: Over the years, we have realized that the key success factors for running a complex and intricate experiential program such as Project Terra Firma are:

- a. Making sure that the content in all our programs meet the following key criteria:
 - i. They need to be experiential in nature (and not theory-based)
 - ii. They need to impact a specific life skill to the students
 - iii. They need to be fun and enjoyable
- b. They need to challenge and excite students with competitions and events
- c. The results of the program should be measurable and auditable
- b. Gain sponsorship and buy-in from the local BEO
- c. Develop good working relationships with the school principals and teachers gaining their buy-in as well as passive participation in our programs
- d. Integrate the programs with school curriculum, and make sure that what we teach in our programs does not collide with what the school teachers teach in their core classes
- e. Have a dedicated staff with past expertise and experience in each program; with a full-time librarian in each school

7. How to donate: You have multiple options by which you can contribute to our projects:

- a. You can donate online at <http://www.ashraya-usa.org/ways-to-help/ashraya-monetary-contribution-form/>
- b. You can make corporate donations through your company (if your company makes matching donations). We are registered on Guidestar with a gold standard: <http://www.guidestar.org/profile/52-1791311>.
- c. You can write out a paper check in name of ASHRAYA and mail it to us at **2418, 130th Place NE, Bellevue, WA 98005** in US; or to **D601, Jacaranda Block, Brigade Millennium, JP Nagar 7th Phase, Bangalore 560078** in India
- d. You can buy your favorite goods on Amazon through [smile.amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) and select us as the charity that receives 0.5% of your purchase. You can select our charity by entering our EIN 52-1791311 or our name (Ashraya Corp).

8. Our Social Covenant: As a funder of a Project Terra Firma program, you will own the program fully and can build bonds directly with the students and Ashraya members involved in that program. We will send you quarterly project monitoring reports by email. You can find copious photos and videos of activities on our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCp-yoRI1L57sfwqjUq3LQJA>) that we update every 3 months. You can visit the school units and our project office on your visits to India (we will arrange the logistics for you). We would love for you to also conduct workshops for our students on specific areas of expertise (e.g. photography, astronomy). You can finally participate as a judge and/or be a guest in our annual day event. We invite you to come and be a fellow itinerant in our journey, to touch and be touched doubly in return.



If you need to know more about our programs, please contact us at **404-457-1073 (Vasuki)** or **404-457-5455 (Jayanthi)** or send us an email at vasuki.subbarao@gmail.com. We look forward to working with you in continue making ASHRAYA Project Terra Firma a success in the coming years, and thank you in advance for your support and well wishes.

Regards and Cheers,

Vasuki & Jayanthi
President and Treasurer,
ASHRAYA

