

To: Professor Toomey, Instructor of English 379: Introduction to Professional Writing

From: Mira Kapoor, Student

Subject: A Report on the Feasibility of Creating and Submitting a Proposal to Seek Funding for a Mobile Children's Library to Serve the Children of Migrant Workers in Urban India

Date: November 7, 2024

Purpose:

This memo aims to determine the best approach to implementing a mobile children's library aimed at providing education and skill-building opportunities through traditional stories and oral storytelling traditions in migrant communities in urban India and discuss the feasibility of submitting a grant proposal by mid-December to seek funds for such a project.

Summary:

This report outlines the feasibility of the completion of a grant proposal seeking funds to initiate a mobile library to provide education and skill-building opportunities for the children of migrant workers (that is, people moving in between states or cities in search of employment) in urban India through traditional stories and activity-based learning opportunities (such as writing workshops, oral storytelling, and street theatre performances). The proposed grant proposal would seek funds to procure the materials required to start and maintain this project (such as vehicles and books) and employ professional storytellers and staff. Given that prior experience and preexisting personal knowledge have provided me with strong research and writing skills, the completion and submission of this grant proposal by the deadline (mid-December) seems feasible.

Background:

As India rapidly urbanises, people are migrating from rural to urban areas in search of employment, with Reuters reporting that “nearly two thirds of India’s population under 35”¹ move to bigger cities in search of employment. These jobs are typically part of the country’s informal economy, in which workers engage in temporary or seasonal work. As a result, these jobs do not provide social protections or living wages, meaning they are unlikely to sustain life in the city due to the higher cost of living and are less likely to remain in the same job or city for long.

Children who move with their families are less likely to have stable access to education as “these children remain in ‘hard-to-reach’ and ‘invisible’ groups”² due to the mobility of their parents’ jobs. Moreover, studies show that migrant populations frequently struggle to assimilate due to cultural differences, which can result in “deculturation, in which the individual or minority group experiences a loss of cultural identity, alienation and acculturative stress.”³ These cultural differences also heavily influence the children of migrant workers as they struggle due to cultural and linguistic barriers because of the “substantial sociocultural, economic and regional diversity”⁴ of migrant worker populations.

¹ Kaushik, Krishn, and Joseph Campbell. “India’s migrant millions: Caught between jobless villages and city hazards.” *Reuters*, 18 Apr. 2023, www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-migrant-millions-caught-between-jobless-villages-city-hazards-2023-04-18.

² Rajan, S. Irudaya, and Kuldeepsingh Rajput. “Right to Education of Migrating Children in India.” *World Bank Blogs*, 16 Mar. 2024, blogs.worldbank.org/en/peoplemove/right-education-migrating-children-india.

³ Bhugra, Dinesh, and Matthew A Becker. “Migration, cultural bereavement and cultural identity.” *World psychiatry : official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)* vol. 4,1 (2005): 18-24.

⁴ Rajan, S. Irudaya, and Kuldeepsingh Rajput. “Right to Education of Migrating Children in India.” *World Bank Blogs*, 16 Mar. 2024, blogs.worldbank.org/en/peoplemove/right-education-migrating-children-india.

Therefore, initiatives such as Mobile Learning Creches have begun to emerge in areas with high migrant populations to provide early childhood education to the children of migrant workers. However, while mobile libraries have been successful in multiple cities across India (with several focused on providing books to underprivileged communities), my research found none that were specifically targeted towards the country's migrant populations, and fewer still have attempted to use traditional stories and storytelling to aid in skill building and easing acculturative stress.

I would like to propose a project in which mobile libraries would be stationed in areas with high migrant populations (much like the preexisting Mobile Learning Creches), which would help foster a sense of community while improving literacy rates in the surrounding areas by ensuring stable access to books and learning. Some of the specific aspects I would like to include as part of this project would be:

- Professional storytelling: India has a rich history of oral storytelling based on regional stories (which are primarily folktales). As such, most states (or indeed, even regions within states) have developed diverse performance styles of storytelling (such as puppet theatre, musical performances and dance forms). The focus on traditional stories from different regions would ease the effects of acculturative stress while allowing the children of migrant workers to connect with others living in areas around them due to the exposure to traditional folktales from across India (both by reading and listening) in a community setting.

- **Writing Programs:** Professional writers could run group sessions by teaching the children important writing skills (such as creative writing and other forms of writing they may encounter). These programs would help build employable skills that would later increase job options and contribute to a potential entry into the formal economy (with jobs that offer better security) by boosting literacy rates.
- **Street Theatre Performances:** Based on my experiences growing up, street theatre performances are an incredible way to foster a sense of community and build connections with those living around you. Additionally, organising theatre performances of these regional folktales would allow the children to develop valuable soft skills (such as public speaking, communication and collaboration) that could further contribute to their employability.

While the initial stages of this project could be based in one of the cities with the highest migrant populations in the country (Mumbai and Delhi are both viable candidates in which to run the pilot project), the mobility of the project makes it highly adaptable (and therefore scalable) as it could be moved or reorganised to suit migrant populations in different cities across India.

Several NGOs specialise in working with underprivileged children in India and run initiatives aimed towards improving the educational opportunities available to those in need. Of these, the Regenboog Foundation and the Smile Foundation seemed to be ideal candidates on whose behalf the grant could be requested. The Regenboog Foundation has an existing mobile library system that delivers books to public schools in India⁵. Therefore, it could be reasonably assumed that

⁵ *Mobile Library - Regenboog Foundation*. regenboogindia.org/projects/mobile-library.

they may wish to expand this project to the children of migrant workers who may not have access to public schooling systems. However, my research found that they operate within a limited area⁶, which may not be accessible to the target audience and limit the scope of the project. Meanwhile, the Smile Foundation has experimented with other mobile facilities, such as mobile hospitals (which have proven effective). However, my research did not indicate the existence of a mobile library program run by them. Given that the Smile Foundation's goal to "[create] and [enable] learning environment[s]"⁷ aligns with the aim of this project and their outreach would allow me to explore scalable opportunities with this project—I believe that writing the grant proposal from the perspective of someone working on the Smile Foundation's behalf would be most effective.

Likewise, there are several grant-funding organisations to whom I could address my grant proposal. Two foundations that stood out to me in my research were the Hewlett Foundation and Paul Hamlyn Foundation, both of which have funded several non-profit projects in India. However, both foundations have vastly different capacities concerning the funds they can provide. While the Paul Hamlyn Foundation offers grants ranging from \$11851 to \$ 35553⁸, the Hewlett Foundation can provide larger grants (with some reaching \$250000⁹).

As such, I will need to complete further research on the budget required to undertake such a project. My preliminary research found that starting a mobile library in India costs about \$3000 (

⁶ *Mobile Library - Regenboog Foundation*. regenboogindia.org/projects/mobile-library.

⁷ "Education NGO in India: Charity Supporting Children Education." *Smile Foundation*, 29 July 2024, www.smilefoundationindia.org/education.

⁸ India Fund. "India Fund." *Paul Hamlyn Foundation*, www.phf.org.uk/funding/india-fund.

⁹ "Impact Foundation (India) - for General Operating Support." *Hewlett Foundation*, 22 Aug. 2024, hewlett.org/grants/impact-foundation-india-for-general-operating-support.

which primarily includes the cost of the vehicle and the driver's salary¹⁰), this price could vary based on the size and number of vehicles used for this project. This, along with the fact that the aforementioned amount does not include the cost of books, facilitators (for the writing and street theatre performance programs), and storytellers, means that the amount requested in my grant proposal will be higher than this amount.

Along with research on budget requirements for this project, I will also need to conduct thorough research on specific data sets that would help substantiate my argument in support of the project. These would primarily include disaggregated population data from the city in which I choose to run the pilot project, as that would allow me to provide a clearer analysis of the project, its target audience and its goals. I plan to follow a weekly timeline in completing the research process and writing my grant proposal, as shown below:

Week	Task	Task Type
November 11-17	Conduct background research	Research
November 18-24	Finalize budget, facilities, personnel requirement and proposed schedule	Research
November 25-December 1	Complete cover letter, Table of contents, statement of problem, statement of request	Writing

¹⁰ Goyal, Divya. "Libraries on wheels: How Punjab's Hoshiarpur is taking a giant step forward, book by book." The Indian Express, Feb 5, 2023.
indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/how-punjab-hoshiarpur-is-taking-a-giant-step-forward-book-by-book/.

December 2-8	Complete description of proposed work, description of available facilities, qualification of personnel	Writing
December 9-15	Complete budget, summary, appendices of figures, references	Writing
December 16- 18	Finalize grant proposal	Revision

Conclusion:

I could feasibly create a grant proposal for a mobile library for migrant communities in urban India by the end of the semester. My experiences working and interning with non-profits in India have provided me with the knowledge to comfortably navigate the research and writing processes in creating this grant proposal. Having previously adapted traditional folktales into a children's book, I am familiar with traditional storytelling practices due to the research I conducted while exploring how to best present the stories I was adapting. This, paired with my cultural background (having grown up in India), has made me deeply passionate about projects centred around traditional storytelling and provided me with the skills required to build projects and conduct research on initiatives in this area. Moreover, the information found during the preliminary research process has provided me with a base upon which I can substantiate to complete this project by the deadline. The aforementioned timeline provides the order in which I plan to approach the completion of this grant proposal, with the majority of the writing process taking place during the Thanksgiving break, when I expect to have more time to dedicate to the

project. While my timeline remains flexible, I aim to complete this grant proposal well before the deadline to account for any delays caused by assignments from my other courses.

Work Cited

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