

IALSE Foundation Day Celebration

Date: 29 December 2025

Time: 6.30 PM (IST)

Platform: Google Meet

Event Report

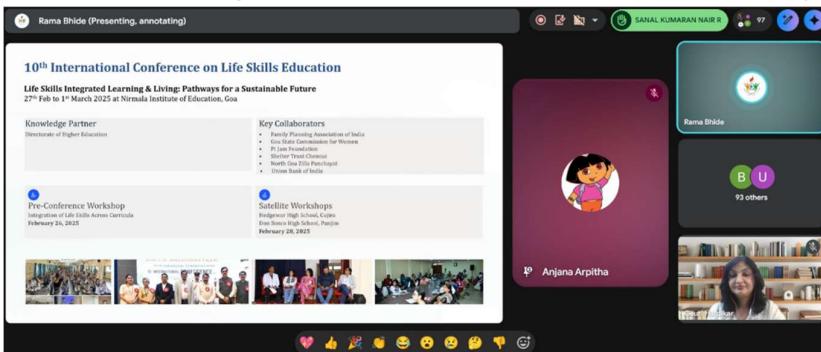
The Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE) celebrated its 15th Foundation Day on 29 December 2025 through an online event hosted on Google Meet. The occasion assembled all IALSE members, educators, practitioners, and invited guests from both national and international spheres to reflect on IALSE's journey and discuss the growing importance of life skills education.

The programme was led by Ms. Arpita, who conducted the session with clarity and warmth, ensuring smooth transitions between segments.

The Welcome Address was delivered by Dr Gauri Hardikar, Vice President of IALSE, who explained the significance of the Foundation Day celebration and reaffirmed IALSE's dedication to promoting life skills education to enrich lives and strengthen society. She warmly welcomed the Chief Guest, Ms Poornima Garg, Country Director of Room to Read India, and the Foundation Day Lecture was delivered by Mr Saktibrata Sen, Senior Director of Programs at Room to Read India. She warmly welcomed all those present at the programme.



Ms. Rama Bhide, Secretary of IALSE, gave a detailed overview of the organisation's achievements during 2024-25. She noted that the year saw steady growth and meaningful progress under the leadership of Dr. A. Radhakrishnan Nair, President of IALSE. Major highlights included successfully hosting the 10th International Conference on Life Skills Education in Goa, electing a new Executive Committee in February, launching several new initiatives under dedicated verticals led by IALSE's Executive Committee members, and increasing IALSE's membership to 305 members.



Ms. Bhide highlighted the strategic initiatives and collaborations, emphasizing partnerships with institutions such as Loreto College, Kolkata, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), PTM College, and others. These efforts aim to strengthen curriculum development and capacity building in life skills education. She informed participants about the institution of three National Awards in Life Skills Education—Lifetime Achievement Award, Best PhD Thesis Award, and Best Master's Thesis Award—to recognize excellence and contribution in the field. She also briefed members on the revamped official website, the activation of IALSE's Facebook and Instagram pages, and the formation of an Advisory Board comprising 12 distinguished individuals, including honorary members and past presidents. She highlighted key training and academic initiatives, including a collaborative research project to study the status of life skills education across Indian States and Union Territories, aligned with NEP 2020 recommendations. Training programmes included a five-day Train-the-Trainer programme at Loreto College, Kolkata, and a 15-hour online certification programme on decision-making. She also shared that IALSE launched three monthly lecture series and marked a major milestone with the release of the two-volume training manual titled "Core Life Skills for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Training Manual."

In his Presidential Address, Dr. A. Radhakrishnan Nair, President of IALSE, reflected on the organisation's 15-year journey, noting its growth from a small, skeletal group at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Youth Development to a pan-Indian association with a presence across South Asia. He explained why 29 December is a significant milestone: it commemorates the day the founding members worked on the memorandum, making it the culmination of the year for the association. He emphasised the diversity of IALSE's membership and its efforts to establish life skills education as a distinct, multidisciplinary academic discipline.



Dr Nair observed that worldwide, different organisations define life skills in various ways—such as social-emotional learning, soft skills, people skills, or 21st-century skills—and there is no comprehensive and unified framework for life skills education. Addressing current

challenges and future priorities, he emphasised the urgent need to make life skills education mandatory, noting that although NEP 2020 and statutory bodies support it, implementation in schools and higher education institutions remains limited. He mentioned that IALSE has launched a nationwide research project to evaluate the state of life skills education, especially in light of growing concerns like suicidal tendencies and addiction among children.

Dr. Nair highlighted the absence of a standardised assessment system and noted the need to revisit the 2010 Life Skills Assessment Scale, which is now outdated, to develop a scientifically robust and culturally relevant tool. He urged members to organise more online and offline programmes to strengthen IALSE and transform life skills education into a national movement. He warmly welcomed the Room to Read fraternity, acknowledged their extensive work in life skills education, and expressed hope for continued collaboration, especially for the upcoming international conference.



Ms. Poornima Garg, the Country Director of Room to Read India and the Chief Guest of the event, began her address by sharing the story of Suman, a 14-year-old girl who chose to stay in school and mentor others after participating in life skills sessions. This illustrated how life skills provide adolescents with “access to agency.” She stated that life skills education should not be treated as an “add-on,” but rather as a “bridge between learning

and life,” enabling adolescents to navigate constraints and imagine possible futures. She highlighted that, when designed through a gender lens, life skills education empowers adolescent girls to challenge inequality and transition into adulthood with confidence. She also emphasised the importance of engaging boys in conversations around masculinity, respect, consent, and shared responsibility to achieve meaningful gender transformation.

Ms. Garg emphasised the need to update life skills frameworks to align with NEP 2020 and called for the inclusion of climate consciousness, financial literacy, emotional well-being, and civic responsibility as essential skills. She highlighted that life skills are most effective when they are intentionally designed, developmentally sequenced, and integrated into the education system. She also stressed the importance of teacher training and warned against one-size-fits-all approaches, noting that life skills content must adapt to the changing needs of learners, especially older adolescents and young adults.

Ms. Garg concluded by asserting that for life skills education to be effective at scale in India, it must go beyond pilot projects and become institutionalised within curricula, teacher training, and monitoring systems through collaboration among academia, practitioners, government, and civil society.



Mr. Saktibrata Sen, Senior Director of Programs at Room to Read India, delivered the Foundation Day Lecture, focusing on the various epistemologies and definitions of life skills. He explained that over the past twenty years, the term “life skills” has gathered multiple disciplinary perspectives, making it highly multidisciplinary. While recognising the need for some level of standardisation for assessment and impact measurement, he argued that the diversity of terms—such as employability skills, soft skills, socio-emotional skills, and 21st-century skills—is a strength rather than a weakness.

Drawing on Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia, Mr. Sen stated that every definition of life skills is valid because it arises from diverse human experiences and academic disciplines. He emphasised that life skills function as both global and local, as well as individualised constructs, and thus require the inclusion of multiple voices, especially from a gender perspective. He highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder dialogue involving practitioners, government bodies, and funders.

Mr. Sen identified deep, critical, and ethical information processing as one of the most essential life skills for young adults today, especially amid overwhelming flows of information. He stressed that the ability to quickly process information, evaluate its authenticity, make informed decisions, and do so ethically is crucial in modern society. He also explained that information processing is fundamentally metacognitive, requiring deliberate effort, and therefore life skills must be intentionally taught across various subjects, professions, and platforms, both within and outside formal curricula.



The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks by Mr. Sudhir Kumar Kapoor, Executive Committee Member of IALSE. He expressed gratitude to Mr. Saktibrata Sen for highlighting the ethical aspects of life skills education and to Ms. Poornima Garg for her insightful address, especially on gender and girls' education. He thanked the Room to Read delegates, IALSE members, and international participants, and acknowledged the leadership and efforts of Dr. A. Radhakrishnan Nair, President, Dr. Gauri Hardikar, Vice



President, and Ms. Rama Bhide, Secretary, for making the 15th Foundation Day Celebration a meaningful and successful event.

