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Updates regarding land for the resource center.

First phase of registration of the land was completed on 6th. The first phase included stock taking by the government surveyors about the land, water sources, trees, etc on the land, background check and approval of purchase by registrar and the submission of the original land documents by the owners to the registrar including documentation pertaining to why they want to sell the land. The government gave some concessions for the registration.

What is left is for the registrar's office to create a new document in the name of Bharathi Trust for the land.

Many villagers had come to the registrar's office and offered to volunteer at the upcoming village resource center. The community participation and interest in encouraging, but much work needs to be done now.

What is the next step?

Right now Muriel and three of her friends who are students in organic farming are coming from Belgium to take a look at the land and help plan what to do next. Muriel had volunteered for Bharathi Trust in 1996-97 and has been in touch with them since. She is a sociologist by profession and had arranged a trip for Siddamma to visit Belgium and arranged meetings at universities and with professionals. The fund-raising had followed this trip. They primarily plan to work on planting trees.

The next step would be to spend some time at Auroville to study organic farming and other such resource centers to understand what was successful and what was not. This is also a good time to get the source people who wanted to help including Namalvar agricultural university to do a careful survey of the land.

We also need to work with the technical people from the government to work on rain harvesting for the dry part of the land. We will need to look for resources for this.

What are the organizations other than Auroville that you plan to stay at?

M.S. Swaminathan foundation has various resources on alternate cultivation, MIDS (Adyar) has a lot of literature on development work.

Part from looking outwork we also need to learn and understand what skills in agriculture, herbal medicine are still useful and try to

egrate them into existing systems.

parallel some action will take place on the land and it will not be left empty. Some area is occupied by sugarcane which the last owner would like to harvest, in other areas peanuts were planted and they have already been harvested.

water is available, bullocks are still required.

Updates regarding released bonded laborers

Presently we only have a make shift classroom and there is a need for full time school to be set up. With the rain season it is getting quite difficult to manage without a decent shed.

How about the laborers themselves?

The tribal department is in looking into getting them started on an occupation. They will also be inspecting the area to look at habilitation of this village in this new area. Since no village existed before there are no amenities including drinking water. Presently we installed a large tank and 1 light and the government workers come and fill the tank periodically.

The panchayat they will fall under has no funds allocated for a new village and the temporary accommodation was built by the government. However the thatch walls and roof is melting away against the rains and also require immediate reconstruction.

We plan to give bricks so that they can build their own homes. There are almost 200 families and we have approached Action AID to help with this.

There are some elder children who used to go to school before their parents joined the rice mills when they dropped out of school. The parents of these children want them to go to a hostel as both parents work and might migrate to areas with no nearby schools. The government schools in Tiruvallur where these children want to go is presently short in resources and is conducting school in two shifts.

What is the state of the government hostels i.e. are they good?

They are not very good, but we don't have the resources to commit to taking care of the children. It is a full time job and we would want to do it well. The best we can do at this point is monitor the state of these hostels and work on improving the quality....