

Project Proposal Manigal Indra Nagar -2019-2020

Background information -The gypsy community is a nomadic group that originally engaged in hunting and bead selling. Over the years, as they became a settled community and lost their traditional occupations, many of them took to the profession of rag picking to make a living.

The gypsy colony in Thiruvannamiyur has about 60 and odd families settled in one room tenements allotted to them by the government. Garbage clearing, in areas around Thiruvannamiyur is the main occupation of the community. Bead selling is undertaken during major temple festivals once or twice a year by many and during the other times collecting, sorting and clearing garbage is the main source of income. Once a family member gets a job in the garbage clearing profession he or she is able to find avenues for others of the community. Youth too gets sucked into this profession very early in life. Young children too double up as rag pickers off and on.

The Narikuravar community speaks a different language- vagriboli which has no script. Their customs and dress are different and they remain in their own segregated groups. There is mutual distrust between them and other local communities. Their children remain outside the mainstream education and join their parents in eking out a living.

Motivation for starting the project

Project Manigal was started with a view to bring in the children from the Narikuravar community into the main stream education system. With rags and garbage stacked all around, the stark contrast in the living conditions of the gypsies and the surrounding slums was hard to miss for any one. A whole section of children of this community were left out of the system and the advances and efforts made in improving the government school education system did not seem to have percolated to this community. A 100 percent illiteracy rate and 100 percent dropout rate in the heart of the city even though the primary school was at a walking distance was a shocker. The group members of Manigal were already involved in other alternative educational programs and the sight at the gypsy colony beckoned the group to intervene. The group took the challenge of educating a small group of children from the gypsy community and make a difference.

The early years of the project -The project began in a small way with a non-formal education program inside the gypsy colony for all the drop outs and non-enrolled children. However after a year, when it had sufficient rapport with the children and the

community, the project decided to move inside the government school so that all the enrolled children could be brought back to school and exposed to the school environment. The school authorities extended all cooperation so that the gypsy children could be retained inside the school.

The process of mainstreaming was not easy. The gypsy children and parents found it difficult to adhere to school timings- they were often sent back either for coming late coming or for their unkempt dress. Older children were noisy and unruly and would talk in their own language and hang around in the corridor. Their presence became a disturbance to the school and at the slightest scolding, the children would walk away. Parents would call from the gate and children would walk in and walk out at any time of the day. The children were highly independent and disciplining them was not easy. The project teachers were at the receiving end at the school and at the colony. Long absenteeism during thiruvizhas and festivals for weeks and months too disturbed the adjustment of the children in the school. Despite these difficulties, the arrangement of teachers visiting the colony and picking up children and taking responsibility for their children built in the trust of the parents. A community which rejected sending their children to school earlier started sending them to school and thus the formal education of gypsy children began.

To integrate or segregate- The dilemma

Initially in the first year the project teachers worked inside the classrooms along with the class teacher. They attended to the gypsy children and a few others in a small group, by giving special attention. But often in combined classes or when teachers were away in training etc, it was not possible for the project teachers to give undivided attention to the gypsy children. In large classes the gypsy children, who were much older, couldn't adjust nor benefit. As a next option the gypsy children were taken out of their class in batches, for a couple of hours and given special attention. But that too was a problem as children wouldn't go back to their classes and stubbornly remained near the door for the remaining hours of the day. Helping long absentees catch up and making them attentive and less disruptive was proving to be a herculean task for the project teachers as well as other teachers of the school. Teaching them as a separate group, bringing them on par with other children and then integrating in their respective classes seemed the fastest route to closing the educational gap. Also when gypsy children could talk in their own language and be with their peers and expressed in their own language they started enjoying schooling and started settled down.

Working with the gypsy community, from experience, we discovered that no one model, method or approach works with all of them. The project had to constantly revisit its own strategies and respond to realities in the ground and lower its own expectations. Children who were responding nicely to the teaching and learning process would suddenly disappear and move to another colony

or state thereby frustrating the teachers and volunteers. The children considered as difficult and given up as impossible would suddenly pick up the threads and respond and progress well.

Teaching and learning process - The teaching learning process had to begin right from the scratch even though some of the children were much older for their class. They were engaged through diverse methods, materials and interactive sessions. In an environment of acceptance and trust children started settling down. Puzzles, games, worksheets, flash cards aroused their curiosity. An attempt was made to make children confident as learners. Thus the routine of school going was built up slowly. When some children settled down, they brought in their siblings and friends.

It is the flexible approaches that we used, tailoring the teaching and learning according to the needs of individual children that enabled many gypsy children to sustain in the schooling process and succeed. Learning support extended to them in the foundational years helped them to continue schooling and move on middle schools. Better performing children were accepted more easily in the new schools and this helped to break stereotyped views about them.

Sending children to hostels, after the completion of primary, was the choice of parents in the early stages. The project helped many children to get admitted to various hostels – RMK hostel, PVR hostel, Sivananda Gurukulam, Thakkar Baba and Avvai Home. Over time, as many gypsy children moved to neighbouring middle schools and successfully continued their education, hostels became less popular. Many parents preferred to educate their children as day scholars rather than send them to hostels.

Middle school and higher education - As the children completed primary school, the project introduced the parents to the neighbourhood schools and created access to them. However transition from primary, where they were given special attention, to middle school was not easy. Reaching on time to middle and high schools was and continues to be a serious problem with the gypsy children as these institutions offer no special privileges for coming late. The project volunteers and teachers constantly work as intermediaries, explain some of the special problems and get some concessions for the gypsy children from the schools. The project interacts with the children and parents counselling them to be regular. It also helps them to cope with learning, inside the school premises, wherever possible or in the colony by way of tuitions in the evenings or weekends. The special attention, continuous monitoring and mentoring is helping the gypsy children to progress in the educational ladder despite the barriers they face in school and in their own environment.

The consistent efforts of the past years have resulted in several children completing the school cycle. Ten gypsy children have cleared the class 10 board exam from the gypsy colony in the recent years. Two are in polytechnic colleges and three have reached college levels. These children have raised the bar. Discontinuing education after primary education or taking the children to work is no longer the choice of the parents. RTE children studying in matriculation schools have also raised parent's aspirations and they see schooling as necessary and feasible for their children.

While some have successfully stayed on and completed schooling, there are others who have left after 8th or 9th. The activities of other gypsy youth in the colony - going for movies, travelling and other adventures attract them and they see school as a big bore. They start disliking school when their performances drop. Middle/high school is the time that special monitoring is required as gypsy children start becoming working children, unable to fit into the rigid school structure.'

The children who have completed schooling are beginning to try out jobs in newer areas – as shops assistants, drivers, house keepers in guest houses, Gyms, cinema theatres and are thus slowly moving away from the garbage clearing profession of the rest of the community. Thus education is helping the gypsy children to get better integrated with the rest of the community. As their skills and job opportunities improve, we are hoping some of them will charter a different career for themselves and they will permanently pull out their families from subsistence levels of living.

The present proposal is for continuation of the ongoing efforts of educating the gypsy children thereby improving their living conditions.

The primary school -The Chennai primary school in the area has the strength of 103 children (73 primary and 20 LKG/UKG children. The primary school has 3 teachers, including the HM. Project Manigal besides educating the gypsy children also extends educational support to the primary school so that other children studying in the govt. school get quality education. The project had been making available a variety of teaching and learning materials, puzzles, games, charts, maths kits for both the LkG and the primary school. It had also supported the school by way of mats, sports material, student desks etc.

Besides the project teachers and volunteers undertake remedial coaching for children lagging behind. Special focus was on English learning as the school was recently converted into an English medium school. Sharing educational videos and programs and other online resources with the children, conducting craft and creative activities periodically was also undertaken.

LKG in the school - The project is currently trying to get the children to school early. Starting of LKG in the primary school premises is helpful for the gypsy community. The parents trust the teachers and send their younger children to school. In the earlier years even primary age children joined school very late as the community was reluctant to leave children until they were older.

The Manigal Project has posted two teachers for giving teaching support to the children at the Indra Nagar school as well as follow the education of gypsy children in 8 other educational institutions where they study.

Proposal for continuation of the work - Strategies for 2019-2020

1.For the gypsy children

Get the children very early into the school system, in LKG, and help them get adjusted to other children, school routines at a young age.

Support the learning in the primary school, with special focus on the gypsy children.

Follow up the education of the gypsy children in other middle and high schools in the neighbourhood

Support and follow up gypsy children in the hostels.

Support the education of gypsy children under RTE and help them cope with learning

Help children complete school cycle and take up vocational and other job oriented courses to broaden their occupational avenues.

2.For the primary school

Undertake remedial coaching for children categorised as slow learners by the school and improve their learning levels

Extend help to the primary school by way of TLM, charts, sports material and others.

Undertake English teaching , library and craft activities off and on and use technology for sharing educational content and clarifying concepts for the primary children of the school

3. For the community

Maintain continuous contact with the community to ensure that the gypsy children attend schools regularly

Help the community with admissions, certificates and other formalities necessary for continuation of education

Help gypsy parents with fees and other supplies necessary for continuation of education.

Follow up the tuitions arranged for the children

Address the health, nutrition and hygiene of children in special cases.

Be a mentor where gypsy parents and children can turn to in case of need.

Budget project Manigal (Indra Nagar)- 2019-2020

	Description (Manigal Thiruvanmiyur – 2019=2020)	Details .	Budget 2019-2020
1.	Honorarium Average Honorarium of 2 teachers $10,000 \times 12 \times 2 = 2,40,000$ Bonus $5000 \times 2 = 10,000$ Colony tuition $1000 \times 10 = 10,000$ Total $= 2,60,000$	2 teachers	2,60, 000
2.	Stationery procured in Bulk once or twice Long note books, geometry box, pencils, pens, files, erasers A4 sheets, Marker pens, A4 plastic sheet covers, chalks, staplers, clips, dusters etc	Remedial of Primary school ,tuitions, Middle/High/RTE/ vocational	5,000

3.	Worksheets, print outs, lamination, Xerox of work books	Remedial classes in primary, Tutions	4,000
4.	Craft materials - colour papers , glue, charts, crayons, Sketch pens, paints, scissors and other accessories	Primary school	3,000
5.	Charts, Story books, Flip books/ Colour Xerox of books/binding, Flash cards ,puzzles ,Science kits, - plastic containers, Trays	For remedial classes and for primary school	5,000
6.	Guides for middle and High school, tools/ calculator for vocational	Middle and High school. Vocational, college	5,000
7.	Sports material – Football, Skipping ropes, Tennicoit rings, board games	Primary school	3000
8.	Replacement mats	Primary	3,000
9.	Toys, blocks, play material, for LKG /uKG	LKG/UKG	3,000

10.	Lunch boxes for 30 children @100	Primary, Middle and high school/RTE.Vocational/ LKG/UkG children	3000
11	steel Water bottle and pencil boxes 30 children @150	Primary,Middle and high school/RTE..Vocational/college/LKG/UkG children	4500
12..	Gifts, prizes, dresses for functions/Annual day	Primary	4,000
13.	Fees (for middle /high school/ For vocational/ college/ITI fees (3 children) - 45,000 Other middle/high school fees (6 children) - 10,000	(for middle /high school/ Vocational/ college	55,000
14.	Uniforms, bags, shoes/slippers – 30 children Uniform - 20,000 12 children Tailoring - 10,000 12 children Inner garments - 5,000 30 children Shoes/slippers - 10,000 30 children School bags - 10,000 15 children	polytechnic/college/RTE/ middle and high school	55,000
15.	Coaching/tuition classes (for middle/ high school/RTE children) RTE 1000 x 4 children x 11 = 44,000 Middle/ high school 1500 x 3 children x 10 = 45,000	for middle/ high school/RTE children	89,000

16.	Hostel children's expenses (4 children)	4 children	10,000
17.	<p>Education conveyance</p> <p>- Monthly conveyance -van/auto for children, 400 x 8 children x 11 months = 35,200</p> <p>-For project staff/parents/volunteers visits to schools/hostels/govt.offices/colleges for admissions monitoring, teaching work, TLM purchases 1800 x12 months = 21,600</p> <p>Conveyance for English classes = 6,000</p>		62,800
18.	Health care		10,000
19.	Internet data cards/computer accessories		6,000
20,	Craft teacher to school		15,000
21,	Contingency (certificate procurement- income, caste, photos, application forms, fitness certificate, Outings etc)		10,000
	Sub total Education		6,15,300
	Administration (cupboard repair, locks for class room, cleaning materials for classroom, electric works, baskets, water can)		10,000
	Total Education		6,25,300

