

From Seed Narpanigal we had A S Karthik Bharathi (Asha Fellow) and two other college student-teachers who teach the children.

From Asha Boston: Melli, Sadhana and Seetha

Since Seetha is a new volunteer (and another new volunteer joined briefly), for some part of the visit Karthi updated them on Seed's work. This enabled the new volunteers to hear about this project directly from the project partner.

We had discussions on some other topics.

Medium of instruction

70% of the students go to Tamil medium. While government schools are switching to English medium, the government is also providing incentives that you might get a government job more easily if you go to Tamil medium, which might break the attraction students have for English medium, because English medium in many ways is further impacting learning (because neither the teachers nor the students can fully understand the English in the books).

Increase in enrollment in government schools.

Post COVID there has been an increase in enrollment in government schools, because parents didn't want to pay fees since schools were closed anyway. Out of the regular students who come to Karumbalai, 95 go to a government school (some of them to the corporation school in Karumbalai itself), 90 go to government-aided schools (which tend to have low fees since salaries are paid by the government, in recent years the quality has gone down considerably), and 40 go to private schools (several of them through RTE).

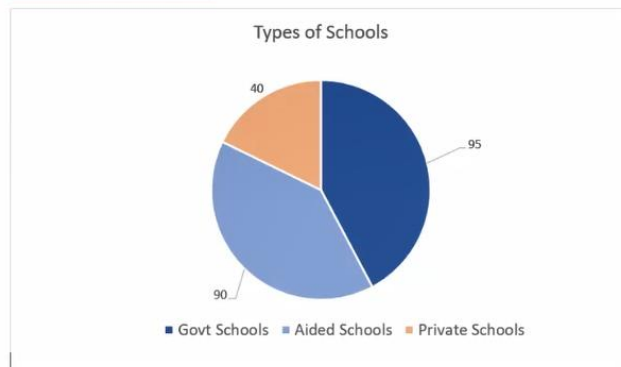
2022-23 Karumbalai

Total Students: 225

Govt School : 95

Private School: 40

Govt. Aided School: 90



It is our goal to help the students stay on in the government schools (and government aided schools) which are free or low-fee institutions. This will remove the fee burden on parents and strengthen these public institutions. We will do this by the supplemental help given in the Seed study centers. If the

children are learning by the combined efforts of the Seed study centers and the government institutions that is a modest step towards strengthening these schools.

Other updates

When one girl in a family goes to college, the other girls in the family go to college as well. This has been a consistent observation.

They work with students at Sevalayam hostel, which is a government funded hostel for dalit students from surrounding villages. These are students there from very disadvantaged backgrounds. They conduct reading sessions, provide notebooks and other material. Before Covid this hostel had ~200 students, post-Covid there are 78 students. They are trying to find out the reasons for this, and seeing whether they can talk to the parents and encourage them to send their students again to Madurai to stay in the hostel and study. All this is the invisible cost of Covid, which don't show up in any record.



In Karumbalai there used to be competition for the volunteer teachers who got an honorarium for teaching at the centers, and in return were helped in college (fees, applications, guidance). This year there was no competition, which Karthi translates as 'fewer people going to college.' Covid has further devastated the desire to learn, students perhaps feel that the education does not have value, why not work now, just as we used to work when schools were closed. All this is the hidden cost of Covid.

Video recording of the virtual visit is available [here](#).