

Phone calls and skype meetings with Karthi, Asha Fellow

By Melli Annamalai, project steward, Asha-Boston/MIT

I regularly talk with Karthi on the phone. Karthi attends Asha India meetings (he could not attend the last one in Mumbai because of a conflict). I have also begun to have regular skype calls with him.

He has faced the following challenges with respect to the original proposal:

- Government school teachers control access to the students
- They typically invite him to come and teach just before the exams
- Karthi will need more regular contact with the students to effectively work with them

Over the years Karthi has over the years mentored around 25 students, and helped them pass class X and in some cases go on to college. I met one of them during the Seed Narpanigal skype call. Karthi feels that focusing on students within Seed Narpanigal will be more effective, and he could make the effort to identify such students who need help in Karumbalai. He has now identified around 30 children in the lower classes who are lagging behind their grade level and who need this mentoring. His desire is to focus on these children, he sees them more of the time, and has a good 'elder brother' relationship with them which helps feel not threatened and fearful while interacting with him.

At the chapter when we discussed this, there was a strong desire to capture his unique ability to mentor these students.

After discussing with Karthi, we identified the following points as immediate next steps in the proposal:

- (1) We should capture what he does as a model for replication in other places. Here Karthi particularly wants help. He wants to enable the volunteers (college students who teach at the centers) to be trained to work with these students who are lagging behind grade level. For this, he would like the volunteers to have a guide book, or a set of guidelines, a curriculum that they can follow to successfully mentor these students. I will be reaching out to Donna in our chapter to help create this. Creating this material is a first step in developing a model that can be used in other places.
- (2) Karthi will think about the government schools again. Now is exam time, after that he will think about what can be done.