

I am Rajaraman Krishnan, a volunteer of Asha Chennai. I had made a visit to Senji on Mar 31, and April 1st. I visited multiple current and potential Asha projects in the vicinity.

On April 1st I visited a few government schools in the area that were requesting for our support in the lines of the Sangamam and Pearl projects. Actually one of the teachers at the Pearl project, Saravanan, cleared TET and got a government teacher posting. He got posted at Kamakaram in Villupuram district. Since he knew what Asha does, he has been contacting us regularly for the last few months asking us to support his school also with additional teacher and materials. There were other schools in the same area which also needed additional teachers.

PUPS Kamagaram

I first visited his school at Kamagaram. The HM of that school was also there. She was also very keen to get Asha support. I spent some time interacting with the children in classes 1 to 3. The children actually knew better English than many of the children I have met in other schools. They have been using phonics to teach them. Supposedly the govt. has distributed some materials for teaching phonics. Here are some details regarding the school.

No of Students: 60
Head Mistress: Rukhmini
Govt Teachers: HM + 1 (Saravanan).
Building: In good condition and has 3 rooms.
Computers: 1.

1 st Std.	3B + 2G
2 nd Std	7B + 10G
3 rd Std	5B + 3G
4 th Std	5B + 5G
5 th Std	9B + 6G

One thing I noted in many of the schools is that the 2nd std has more students than the rest of the classes. This was because, in that year govt. started enforcing the provisions of RTE act strictly and many of the private schools either closed or couldn't admit children. So the admissions in the govt. schools were higher.

There were 6 candidates waiting there for an interview with me. I started them on a test.

PUPS Nallanpillaipetral

Saravanan then took me to Nallanpillaipetral, a significantly bigger schools nearby. The HM at the school was also the cluster head. He is originally from this same village and has returned after serving at

several places and is keen to make a difference here since this is his own village. The school had English medium for classes 1 and 2.

Here are the details of the school.

No of Students: 185

Head Master: S. Arivazhagan.

Govt Teachers: HM + 4.

Building: Really spread out with lots of classroom – way more than they need. Two local village temple lands were falling in the middle of these buildings. It was serving as their playground. But they do not have any ground of their own.

Computers: 2. Actually the cluster resource center was also serving as their computer room. The room was very nice with a good digital projector etc. The computers were quite old but was maintained well and still operational.

1 st Std Eng.	2B + 1G
1 st Std Tam.	10B + 7G
2 nd Std Eng.	9B + 11G
2 nd Std Tam	12B + 16G
3 rd Std	20B + 21G
4 th Std	19B + 16G
5 th Std	16B + 25G

PUPS Sethavarai

Then Mr. Arivazhagan also joined us and we went to the village of Sethavarai. The travel there was very interesting. As you may be aware there are many hills in the Senji area which look like a giant was playing with a pile of rocks. Sethavarai was completely surrounded completely by such hills. It was situated adjacent to one such hill. The school was a small 2 teacher school in the outskirts of that village.

Here are the details of the school.

No of Students: 41

Head Mistress: Didn't get the name.

Govt Teachers: HM + 1.

Building: Just one building with 2 rooms. In good condition.

Computers: 1. I think it wasn't working well.

1 st Std.	3B + 5G
2 nd Std	4B + 3G
3 rd Std	3B + 7G
4 th Std	4B + 2G
5 th Std	6B + 4G

I then returned back to Kamagaram. I corrected the papers of the interview candidates. A few of the candidates have been working at private schools in that area. There are quite a few of those which have busses plying to gather the children. These schools pay the teachers very low amounts. The teachers I talked to were earning Rs 2000 and Rs 2500 per month. On the flip side, because of this they have extremely good teacher student ratio. One of the private schools has 53 children and 7 teachers!!!

The children in Kamagaram were preparing for the annual day. Couple of ladies who are teachers for the local adult illiteracy elimination centre were there helping this school and they were training the children for the annual day. I saw a bit of their dance. I also was served wonderful lunch by the teachers there.

PUPS Kanniampoondi

Then Saravanan took me to the village where he lives, Kanniampoondi. Two of the candidate teachers were also from that village. I dropped them there and then went to the school there. Saravanan's wife is also working in this school. Here are the details about this school.

No of Students: 40

Head Mistress: Did not get her name.

Govt Teachers: HM + 1 (Saravanan's wife).

Building: Not in good condition. It has 2 rooms. There is a good bit of space in the back. They would ideally like a new building to be built in the back and the old one demolished. This will give the school a nice ground.

Computers: None. They would like one.

1 st Std.	1B + 4G
2 nd Std	3B + 8G
3 rd Std	3B + 2G
4 th Std	6B + 2G
5 th Std	4B + 5G

Clearly the number of students at the school does not justify an additional teacher. One mitigating factor is that Saravanan's wife is pregnant and will be going on her maternity leave in July. The school will be impossible to manage with just one HM. If the government doesn't provide a temporary replacement, we can probably provide one for that period.

My Recommendations

There is a strong welcome for Asha's participation at these schools. Since the whole initiative has come from a government teacher himself, it is likely to receive good support. They were even willing

to conduct our assessment. But because of the logistical challenges, I did not pursue it.

Given the numbers, I believe Kamagaram and Nallanpillaipetral can be provided teachers. Nallanpillaipetral actually needs two teachers given its size and given the English medium also introduced there. We may provide a temporary teacher at Kanniyampoondi and then move her to Nallanpillaipetral after Saravanan's wife comes back.