

Project Library

Background:

Asha Chennai has been running community libraries in several villages associated with our project areas in the districts of Thiruvallur, Thoothukudi and Villupuram of Tamilnadu. These were started at different points of time from over a decade back to two years ago. These libraries are predominantly meant to be for children, barring a couple that are used by older kids and adults as well.

The reading habit is best cultivated at a very young age. This can play a transformative role in the lives of the children as well as the community. Language skills are best acquired through reading. This reading habit is not developed among our children especially in poorer communities. The libraries have been launched with this in mind. The reading levels of the children are quite bad even in Tamil, their mother tongue. Therefore in our libraries we stock a curated collection of books in both Tamil and English suitable for children in ages 5 to 15. In some of these libraries we also stock books suitable for young adults (esp. exam preparation books which can be shared). We subscribe to one or two daily Tamil newspapers in a few of these libraries. Couple of our libraries have computers as well. These computers are loaded with digital books, videos and games suitable for children.

To encourage the reading habit, we do various things in our libraries:

1. Give a star for every book that a child reads and once they collect a certain number of stars (say 7 or 10), they will get a free book for themselves.
2. Our librarians will also do story telling to attract the children.
3. Where possible, host activities by other teachers and external resources. These can range from craft activities to science experiments to storytelling, etc.

At all our libraries the usage has been quite good. During the Covid school closure, some of our libraries have also morphed into [mini-schools](#). Our mini-schools had lots of activities aligned to the curriculum of the children. Based on the experience gained from these mini-schools we are going to turn our libraries into activity centres as well in the coming year.





Villages to be covered

Asha Chennai has been working in all these villages for several years. Our involvement with these villages have come about either because we work with schools in these places or through someone from the village and associated with Asha Chennai in some manner.

Here is some background on these villages.

Annanagar – Thiruvallur Dist (from 2017)

This is a very poor village on the banks of Kosasthalayar with a couple of hundred families of Irulars. It is part of the Thirukandalam Panchayat but it is some 1.5 Kms from Thirukandalam with just a mud road leading to their hamlet. With funding from Hyundai Glovis, Asha constructed a new library within the school premises in October 2018. We have access to the premises to operate this library even during non school hours. A part-time librarian from Annanagar takes care of the library. Before the pandemic, the library was kept open for 2-3 hours after school on weekdays and on Saturdays for the children to use. With the pandemic, it was closed till July 2020, reopened and since November 2020, we have been running a mini-school here. Before the pandemic, we also used to have activities conducted by teachers from our project Sangamam, once a week.

Old Thirupatchur - Thiruvallur Dist (New)

Asha has been working with the primary school at Old Thirupatchur for 3 years. About half the children of this school come from the brick kiln about 1.5 Km away. The brick kiln employs some people who have permanently settled in its vicinity and then during the dry season (Jan to May), there is an influx of a number of migrant families from other areas of Tamilnadu as well. These families that live permanently in the area do not have any facilities like PHCs or Balwadis, ration shops in their area. They are very poor and there isn't even a single pucca structure in the area. And if anything the migrant families that live during the dry season inside the brick kiln are even poorer. Asha has been running a mini-school in this area from a hut and under a tree when the weather permits it. The teachers who were from the neighbouring village, were moved by the poverty of the children and wanted to continue working with them even after the schools reopen. We hope to setup a library in the village. A donor has come forward to support the construction of the library.

Nagalapuram – Thoothukudi Dist (from 2009)

This village has a middle school that has been supported for the longest time as part of Project Pearl. We set up a library soon after we started with the school. We used to support a balwadi in this village and are now supporting a balwadi in a nearby village called Panicker Kulam. The balwadi teacher has always been the librarian since the beginning. Our current coordinator hails from this village and the library building belongs to the temple. Until the pandemic, the library was kept open for 2-3 hours on weekdays and for a bit longer time on weekends. It used to be kept open for an hour in the morning for people to read newspapers but that has been stopped. Since June 2020, we have been running two batches of mini-school here.

Suriyaminikkan – Thoothukudi Dist (from 2011)

In 2011-12, we started working with a school at Vadakku Ilantha Kulam. The teacher for this school came from Suriyaminikkan, a village a couple of kms from there. At that time, he set up this library in his village in a very small space by the entrance to the village, and it currently runs from a bigger community room built by the Panchayat and provided to us for exclusive use. Mr. Kuzhandhavelu, an older gentleman, has been the librarian from the beginning

and he spends most of the time in the library. So, it is essentially kept open much longer and is used by adults as well as children.

E.Velayudhapuram – Thoothukudi Dist (from 2009)

When Project Pearl was started, one of the schools we worked with was at Melmandhai, on the East coast right by a lot of salt pans, well North of Thoothukudi. A social worker and well-wisher of Asha, late Mr. Siluvaikani, started this library in his village E. Velayudhapuram, which is a few kms South of this school. He ran the library for about ten years until his demise in 2019. Since then, his father has been running the library and spends most of his time here. It is located on the main road right by a bus stop and so there is a decent footfall of people, both adults and kids, accessing the library. The space is owned by the village.

South Subramaniyapuram, Kayathar – Thoothukudi Dist (from 2019)

This is the newest library in Project Pearl. This is a predominantly Scheduled Caste (SC) neighbourhood a bit outside the town of Kayathar. One of our first teachers in this project Gopinath hails from here. He had left Asha to join the Police department and he was keen on Asha running a library here. He raised funds and constructed a small building for the library in 2019. Since then, we have been running this children's library. There have been a few changes of librarians but we now seem to have someone who might stay with us longer.

Koovachipatti – Tirunelveli Dist (New)

Asha Chennai has two teachers teaching about 40 Kindergarten children inside the Panchayat middle school in this village. For over two years now, the villagers have been requesting Asha to run a library in this village, mainly for the children. We were going to take this up from the academic year 2020-21 but with the pandemic, we had to put our plans on hold. The villagers have even kept a place ready for the library.

Seeyapoondi – Villupuram Dist (from 2016)

Seeyapoondi is a small village in Villupuram district. We started this library 5 years back. We started this library in a very small room which was used as a ration shop. This is the first library we started in Project Thulasi. Since we have lots of games and books it is a very good hit with children. Recently we moved a couple of computers into this library and we have also used the place to have computer classes for older children.

Kattu Chithamur – Villupuram Dist (from 2018)

We started this library three years back. This was requested by youngsters of that village who are writing various exams to apply for government jobs. This library had been built by the Tamilnadu Government but did not have a librarian and was closed. Asha reopened it. We are also trying to add more books suitable for children and make this into a nice children's library. This library was funded in the beginning by Asha Boston.

Kaniyampoondi – Thiruvannamalai Dist (New)

Kaniyampoondi is a very small village with three streets. This library is also constructed by the Tamilnadu government as a Panchayat library. This library does not have any books but a good room and a few shelves are there. Asha has been supporting the school in this village for more than 5 years and one of our current teachers also hails from this village. We have full support of the village. Kaniyampoondi HM also wants Asha to run this library and hopes to bring her school children to the library regularly to use its resources.

Kil Penathur – Thiruvannamalai Dist (New)

Kilpenathur is a small town in Thiruvannamalai district. This town has a PHC, police station, a boys' higher secondary school, a girls' higher secondary school and a primary school. This library is run by the Consumer Protection Bureau. This library has been running for the past 25 years. They are unable to keep the library running

and are asking for our help. We got to know about this through an ex-Asha teacher who lives there and is now working as a government teacher. The library is located in front of the primary school, and 100m from boys higher secondary school. It already has a good collection of books but they are old and not mostly for younger children.

Budget

#	Work Description	Cost Details	Budget
1	Honorarium for librarians in current libraries	Average of Rs.2500 per librarian + Rs.2500 as festival bonus for librarians with us over a year $7*2500*12 + 4*2500$	2,20,000
2	Honorarium for librarians in new libraries	Average of Rs.2000 per librarian $4*2000*8$ months	48,000
3	Books for the 11 libraries	Average of Rs.10000 per library $11*10000$	1,10,000
4	Newspaper subscriptions	Average of 600 per library for five libraries $5*600*12$	36,000
5	Educational games, materials for activities, mats	Each project area might have different variations of these items budgeted for an average of Rs.5000 per library $11*5000$	55,000
6	Rent for four libraries	Rs.500 on average per month for four libraries; the other library spaces are provided for free by the community $4*500*12$	24,000
7	Electricity and maintenance charges	Rs.400 per month on average per library. $11*400$	4,400
8	Fan, lights, chairs for four new libraries and one existing library	Rs.15000 for four new libraries and Rs.4000 for E.Velayudhapuram library $4*15000 + 4000$	64,000
9	Excursion for 11 librarians.	Average of Rs.3000 per head $11*3000$	33,000
10	Contingency		5,600
Total			6,00,000

Total Funds required to run libraries in 11 villages: Rs 6 Lakhs.

Funds required for just the 7 existing libraries: Rs 4.15 Lakhs.