



# *Asha for Education*<sup>TM</sup>

*UFlorida Chapter*

Gators for Asha, 300-9 J W Reitz Union, P.O Box 118505, Gainesville, FL 32601

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## **Progress Report for Project FORWARD**

### **Nov 2010 – May 2011**

This progress report is basically compilations of emails sent periodically by the project partner to the project stewards from Nov 2010 – March 2011. They are in the words of the primary contact at FORWARD Ms. Shiamala baby.



### **Nov 19<sup>th</sup> 2010**

On 17.11.2010, Clustre level Children's Day Programme was conducted in Elapakkam, for Ramapuram cluster. Ramapuram cluster covers 3 centre namely 1.Elapakkam, 2.Mohalwadi and 3.Ramapuram. Children celebrated the day through singing, dancing, Kolattam, reciting poem and making speeches, on the pivot of the day, the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who was a lover of children. The trainers of children conducted the programmes in a beautiful way.



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The programme was watched by the Public of the Elapakkam. The Panchayat President of Elapakkam Mr.Asai Thambi and the Vice president of Mr.Govindaraj graced the occasion and greeted the children on this happy occasion.

Since, we are experiencing monsoon, in an unpredictable way, on 17.11.2010 also it rained but since it was not heavy, the programme continued to the greatest satisfaction of the children.

The children were presented with sweets and presents to mark the time unmemorable. It was a happy day for the deprived children who had a chance to display their talents in singing and dancing in front of the public. All of them enjoyed the occasion very well. Seventy five children participated in the program.



**Nov 19<sup>th</sup> 2010**

### **9.11.2010-International Day of Prevention of Child Abuse**

The international Day of prevention of Child Abuse was observed by asha children, in Puthunemelikuppam Centre, on 19.11.2010. In Puthunemelikuppam, there are 25 children from 4<sup>th</sup> standard to 12<sup>th</sup> standard. Apart from this, 10 children from 1<sup>st</sup> standard to 3<sup>rd</sup> standard attend to the evening class, run by asha for quality education Project. Ms.Vijayalakshmi is the Trainer in this centre.

Children observed this day as their right to a violence free life. They celebrated this day happily and the community joined with them in greeting the children and appreciating



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them for their different talents. Varieties of cultural programmes were conducted by the children. A few interesting ones among them are “Villuppattu” a drama on the theme of rural family’s experience during their sight-seeing trip to the Chennai city, the dance of a robo, the solo of a child in voicing out the abuse a child is facing in her life. Children were presented with writing materials and gifts. The programme ended with a community tea. A salient feature of this day was that the youth were motivated to exhibit their talents by dancing. A few of the youths like Stephen, Rajkumar and Udhay, who were participated in this programme.

This are us situated on the East Coast Road and the community belongs to Fishing community. Before tsunami, they lived on the coastal side in small huts. They lost all their household items along with their huts, in the tsunami. As part of rehabilitation, they are allotted pucca houses by an International charity Organization.





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## January 7<sup>th</sup> 2011

Kindly find herewith the explanation to your queries and we will be more happy to explain them during our conference call also. Thank you for the opportunity.

S.No	Name of the position	Name of the person	Qualification	Responsibility
1.	Facilitator	Mr.K.Balakrishnan	B.A.BEd.,	Daily visiting the children centre by centre, interacting with the children, helping the children in their learning, taking stock of the centre progress of the children, promoting regular attendance of the children.
2.	Programme Co-ordinator	Mr.M.Madurai Veeran	B.A. Philosophy B.A. History	Organizing the different programmes of the project, teachers upgrading programmes, Saturday programmes, taking care of the scholarship program, taking care of the health care & referral programmes, maintaining the



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				the study centre, helping the children with study tools, conducting parent meetings, visiting regular schools & meeting with the regular teachers children's records, etc.
3.	Project Director	M.Shiamala Baby	M.A.B.D.,	Over all in charge of the programme, ensuring the excellent functioning of centres and academic and attitudinal efficiency of the children concerned. In addition to it, finding linkages with other related programmes, aiming at the wholistic development of the children concerned.

## More Details:

The Facilitator Mr. Balakrishnan comes from Vilankadu, one of the covered areas as well as from the deprived community. He starts working from 4 p.m. in the evening and works up to 9:00 p.m. in the night regularly. He visits the centres on a daily basis and keeps a record of his visit and makes comments on the functioning of each centre. Balakrishnan works five hours a day for our project. He starts his work from the local office of FORWARD, in Ramapuram. In the day time, he works in a company. Since the centres are interior and far from Tambaram, a local person is to facilitate the activity and hence Balakrishnan, who has a background of working in the educational field long back (he had worked as a volunteer in a Government led activity named "Arivoli Iyakkam" a Tamil word meaning a movement for Enlightenment, an adult education scheme which was implemented in the villages of Tamil Nadu and now defunct.)

The Programme Co-ordinator is centrally placed and works and visits the centres from Tambaram office. While the Project Director is not paid in Asha for education, her diesel charges while visiting the areas is met with. Since the areas are situated in the deprived and needy places, in the different interior places, diesel costs much while going to the areas. The materials to the centres, children and teachers are carried in the vehicle, during such weekly visits.

Thus, all the three persons, playing three different key roles in the running of the project, work individually as well as collectively, without overlapping, towards achieving the all round development of our children.

**January 26<sup>th</sup> 2011**

**Report on "Children's Parliament" by the deprived children of Asha quality Education centres in Kanchipuram District, promoted by FORWARD.**

**Name of the Programme : Children's Parliament-2011.**



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**Date** : 26.01.2011  
**Time** : 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.  
**Venue** : Sothupakkam (Near Melmaruvathur)

On 26.01.2011, the Republic Day of India, 209 children from 12 ash quality education centres, were organized to celebrate India's Republic Day and to demonstrate Children's Parliament. This took place in Sothupakkam which almost is a central area. Details of the centres which participated are:

S:No	Name of the centres	Name of the Trainers	No. of participants
1.	Thandarai Pudhucheri	Mrs.S.Rekha	12
2.	Thandarai	Mrs.V.Parvathi	19
3.	Kolathur	Selvi. V.Rubeshwari	14
4.	Mathur	Mrs.S.Sivagami	16
5.	Vilankadu	Selvi.S.Sudha	18
6.	Elapakkam	Selvi.S.Soniya	19
7.	Mohalwadi	Mr.K.Rajesh	18
8.	Pulikoradu	Mrs.S.Alamelu	16
9.	Jothi Nagar	Mr.F.Franklin	15
10.	Ramapuram	Mr.V.Rajesh Kanna	23
11.	Kudalore-1	Mrs.Vijayalakshmi	19
12.	Kudalore-2	Mrs.Lakshmi	20
		<b>Total participants</b>	<b>209</b>

Children from Puthunemmelikuppam could not participate and it was decided to hold a separate programme for them. Since the highlight was on "Children's Parliament, children from and above 6<sup>th</sup> standard were alone organized, while children studying in the Primary classes were not collected for this particular gathering. Also it was thought that the day long activity may be too hard for these tiny tots. Still 20 children from primary classes were also there for this programme.

After the orientation on the theme, children come out with the following slogans:

- 'Down, down Party politics. We want people's politics',
- 'People-centric and not scam-centric politics is the need of the hour'.
- 'Politics free from human rights violation, is our right'



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The following children form the Ministerial Board:

1. K.Rakeshkumar	9 <sup>th</sup> Std Elapakkam	Prime Minister
2. M.Aishwarya	6 <sup>th</sup> Std Mathur	Home Minister
3. A.Abinesh	9 <sup>th</sup> Std Kudalore	Finance Minister
4. I.Lakshmi	8 <sup>th</sup> Std thandarai Pudhucheri	Health Minister
5. V.Akash	7 <sup>th</sup> Std Pulikoradu	Education Minister
6. A.Thulasi	9 <sup>th</sup> Std Jothi Nagar	Minister of Transport
7. K.Chandru	9 <sup>th</sup> Std Vilankadu	Opposition Leader
8. K.Akilandeshwari	8 <sup>th</sup> Std Ramapuram	Speaker of the Parliament.

During the opening discussion in the floor, children identified a few issues, which hamper their right to quality education. They are: 1. Absence of teachers in the school as per the number of standards. 2. Absence of able and efficient teachers to handle subjects such as English and Maths. 3. Lack of proper learning-atmosphere in the rural schools like drinking water, toilets, play grounds etc. 4. Lack of proper roads and public transport facility to reach the schools.

While the Ministers took vow to co-operate with the Prime Minister to address their issues, the opposition Leader promised to ensure and to work for the healthy functioning of the Government of the children, for the children and by the children.

At the beginning of the programme, children were motivated to mingle with each other, especially to come out of their local identity and to develop the sense of the broader identity. They were encouraged to take a days-partner, from among any one of the other center and as such each student took a new friend. This was conducted with an aim to widen the child's willingness to accept the new person, to open dialogue with, and to learn more from the other through interaction. It worked out very well. In the feed back Deepika from Kolathur, opined "At first, when I saw other girls and boys coming I felt nervous. I wondered whether they will talk with me. But now I am happy. I felt that I have so many friends from different places, thanks to asha quality education.

Children actively participated and displayed their talents in different cultural activities like dancing, singing, folk dance, acting, oratory, poem reciting, hand works and drawing. In addition to it, Franklin the Education trainers from Jothi Nagar centre made the participants happy by his variety programmes.

At the end of the programme, children were presented with a set of learning materials containing geometry box, pen, pencil, eraser and note book. Children enjoyed



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the day very much. Malathi from Thandarai Pudhucheri reflected the pulse of all the children, when she said “I could not sleep during the previous night; because of the excitement about today’s programmes. I am so happy. Everything, right from morning to this time is so good; I enjoyed every bit of the moment. I am happy over the study materials. Thanks”.

Since the programme was conducted in Sothupakkam, where strong men and women groups are part of FORWARD, the community extended their co-operation in holding the program successfully.



**February 15<sup>th</sup> 2011**

## **Violence against girl children and women in Tamil Nadu: a case study** **A Brief note on the Violence meted out to Anjalai:**

Anjalai is a student of asha quality education centre, run by FORWARD in Mathur, in Achirupakkam Block of Kancheepuram District. Mathur is one of the 13 areas, where FORWARD is working for the wholistic development of its women, children and the community as a whole. FORWARD is implementing quality education



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programme for the school going children of this Dalit village. Thirty five children attend to the evening remedial teaching classes of asha quality education project of FORWARD. Among them 25 children who are in and above 4<sup>th</sup> standard form the target group and the rest who also attend to the evening class are below 4<sup>th</sup> standard.

Anjalai is studying in standard eleventh, in the Government Higher Secondary school, Sothupakkam. She is the third daughter of a poor Dalit family in Mathur. Her mother Ambiga and her mother Kasimani are agricultural laborers. Their elder son and elder daughter are school drop outs and now are working in private companies, in the neighboring towns. With great ambition and vision, they are educating their last daughter.

Anjalai, is a regular student of our remedial teaching centre, since 2007-08. It is this centre, which has motivated her as well as her parents, to continue her schooling. When she entered into asha evening class, she was scoring failed marks. But now thanks to this centre, she showed improvement in her studies and now in her tenth examinations, she had scored 356 marks out of 500. Unlike her elder brother and sister, she is continuing her studies with the help of asha scheme.

Her school is situated in the town of Sothupakkam, which is around 9 kilometers away from her village. Daily she travels by bicycle, (the free bicycle given by the Government of Tamil Nadu). Like all the other schools, her school closes at 4.30p.m. and afterwards, some days the higher secondary class students will have special classes, in which special attention will be paid by the teachers on tough subjects. Anjalai attends to asha classes after coming from the school, from around 6.30 to 8 and sometimes, up to 8.30p.m. This is her routine school timing pattern.

On 05.01.2011, Saturday, she had special classes in her school and after that she was returning back to her home, along with her class mate and friend shivasankari who comes from her neighboring village Muniyanthangal. Mathur is an interior village and there are forlorn and forest areas, between her home and school. Anjalai was driving her bicycle, while Sivasankari was sitting beside her in the same cycle. It was around 5.30 p.m. and as they are traveling in the forlorn road three boys named Sebastian, Muthukumar and Indhira Sekar approached them, in a motor bike, fully drunk.

The boys are from Mathur village and belong to dalit community. They started eve-teasing the girls, using obscene and angry language and asked them to get into their bike. As the girls said no, the boys started quarrelling with them and did not allow them to move ahead. The girls started screaming and crying, but they were threatened with dire consequences if they make any scene. These girls were helpless as nobody was there on the road. After some time, two of their class-mate boys, who were passing that way, came



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to their rescue. But the miscreants threatened them and drove them away. The girls were completely under the spell of fear for life and they begged them to allow them to go to their homes, because it is getting dark. The boys did not listen to their cries.

In the meantime, one of their teachers had passed by that road in his motorbike. The girls tried to call him for help. But the boys threatened to beat him if he comes to their help. They also threatened to kill the girls' fathers, if they try to betray them. It was becoming dark and the girls were so afraid, they agreed to get on the bike. Sebastian took Anjalai's cycle and left it with Kumar. Muthukumar sat on the tank of the bike while Sebastian drove it. Sivasankari was sitting next to him while Anjalai was on the farthest end of the bike. In this way, all the four were on the bike.

Sebastian sped the bike. At one point, he raised the front wheel of the bike making Anjalai fall from the vehicle. When Anjalai was falling down, her dress got into the wheel of the bike and she was dragged. Sivasankari screamed and asked them to stop the bike. But he did not stop immediately. When he stopped the vehicle, Anjalai was already in a pool of blood and was unconscious. This was witnessed by an elderly person who was tending sheep and he rushed to the spot. In the mean time threatened by the incident, the boys took an auto, and put her in and reached her to the hospital in Melmaruvathur, informing them that a lorry has hit her and sped away. The scarred and traumatized Sivasankari had gone back to her home, by Anjalai's bicycle and had informed the thing to her family members.

It has taken 2 to 3 hours for Anjalai to become conscious. When she became conscious, she saw her parents crying. After the initial treatment, her parents filed a complaint in Melmaruvathur police station and she was transferred to the Government hospital in Chrompet near Tambaram. She was hospitalized for 21 days and was discharged on 26<sup>th</sup> of January.

The traumatized Anjalai now lives in a different world of fear, suspicion and hatred for young men. She does not want to go to school and does not want to go anywhere. She speaks less and looks gloomy and depressed. The girl, who happily dances and is always active in the evening asha quality education centre of FORWORD, is now shuts herself in her small hut all the time. She is under trauma and disillusionment. She has been talking about committing suicide and her father because of fear is watching her day and night, neglecting his labour. The whole family is under threat from the culprits. Fearing life-threat from the culprits, her parents had sent her elder brother to their relative's house in Chennai.

Though the culprits belong to the same Dalit community, they are well off economically than Anjalai's family and has a background of rowdism. He is the relative



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of village leaders and is safeguard by them. Anjalai feels that going out of her house will be a threat to her life and morality.

Now a case has been filed in the Police station by Anjalai's father to take action against the culprits. FORWARD is monitoring it, since the culprits are bribing the police officials to let them go free. We are constantly doing counseling to her and try to make her confident, shedding her fear off. Sivasankari who escaped physical wounds is also under trauma. She also is not going to school after this incident. We are visiting and counseling her also.

When we visited the Police Station, the police officer himself tried to defend the culprit of innocence. The culprits, fearing arrest had got bail order from the High Court and are walking free of fear.

After 63 years of independence in India, girls and women are still without enjoying the freedom to go to school and travel on the roads safely. Alcoholism and media which highlights sex and violence in films, had spoiled the youth, the future of India. The result is this existing India with growing number of crimes against girl children and women.

Political (Party politics) power is coupled with monitory power (black money) and this negative force monitors the deterioration of Indian society's well established value system. Education, which is supposed to ensure the good social, moral and ethical values has failed since now education is commercialized, after the entry of globalization.

Here, FORWARD is trying to make a difference in the life of communities through quality education. By promoting life-based values, it moulds children to be better citizens of tomorrow with human rights and social justice based life.

In the case of Anjalai FORWARD is addressing this serious issue from various angles like counseling & empowering the girl, punishing the culprits, sensitizing the stakeholders on human right values of girls & women, waging war against the bad effects of media, the Government's promotion of alcoholism for the reason of revenue and the responsibility of the communities in safeguarding the rights of the weak and the voiceless.

Unlike other girls, Anjalai, because of the experience of her quality education, is slowly coming back to her normalcy. With a cap on her head sometimes she comes and sits along with asha evening class children, who are happier to receive her once again in their fold. We are trying to put her back in her school after having a thorough medical check-up.



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**March 16<sup>th</sup> 2011**

## **Activity Report of Anti-Smoking Day Public Demonstration -12.03.2011.**

### **An Activity Report:**

**Date** : 12.03.2011.  
**Venue** : Bus stand, Tambaram, Chennai – 600 045.  
**Theme** : Anti-Smoking Day – Observance.  
**Object** : to sensitize the stakeholders, smokers, and the general public about the evil effects of smoking, and to promote smoking-free status practice in Tambaram and its surrounding areas.

### **Context:**

On 12<sup>th</sup> of March, being the anti-smoking day, an awareness creating public demonstration was conducted on no-smoking, with an aim to sensitize the public about the evil effects of smoking and there by to make Tambaram and its surrounding as smoking-free areas.

In her key note address, Shiamala Baby, the Director of FORWARD pointed out the sad realities about smoking and the evil effects on the smokers as well as on those who are around the smokers. As per one census, a death toll of 2500 persons are taking place every day due to smoking and 40% of infant are affected in an indirect way. There is an opportunity of cancer one in seventy two of the smokers, especially in mouth and lungs. Smokers are not the only affected but those who inhale the smoke also become passive smokers.

The dangers of tobacco products and smoking were brought to the attention of the public through various strategies like distribution of handbills, simple and meaningful songs, street plays, raising slogans and open dialogue with the viewers.

The participants demanded the shop keepers to stop selling tobacco products. It also demanded Governement not to favour multinational companies to earn profit through dumping of tobacco products like cigarettes in India, at the risk of destruction in so many innocent lives.

The response was very positive, since the theme of the demonstration is a sincere one. Many commuters stood and listened to the whole programme. They asked for bit notices voluntarily. At the end, when the resolution was taken, the public joined with the demonstrators in keeping this campaign alive, until a smoker free Tambaram is formed.



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Women, children and men belonging to different areas, where FORWARD is working in Kanchipuram District of Tamil Nadu, participated actively. The demonstration had reached more than two thousand persons as the programme was conducted in the heat of the city in the evening time, when the flow of commuters is countless. Two thousand bit notices were distributed to the public, apart from the organized participants of the programme.

