

26 Aug 05

Update on the Resource Center

- Sanjeev Ranganathan

Smita from Asha Cleaveland visited the resource center a couple of days back.
(- *Sanjeev to work on ensuring that she completes a site visit report.*)

Muriel from Belgium was visiting the resource center with her colleagues and I spoke to her about her visit and their activities. She mentioned that the location and facilities were very nice for the resource center. There was good energy and enthusiasm in the local community to participate in the activities at the center. She was at enjoying the last couple of days at the center. They had been there for 20 days. She mentioned a couple of small NGOs that she volunteers with in Belgium that work towards sustainable development and had supported part of the center.

I asked her what their activities were, she said that the five students who had come with her were primarily planting trees, but she was on vacation ☺ and her only responsibility was to learn about the activities, write reports and water the trees. I asked her to send me her report and asked me if I can read Belgian ☺. She said that she was working on surveys and step-by-step development of the center.

She then spoke of Namalvar's work and his visit to the center. Namalvar has a lot of experience with organic farming. He is presently working with desalinating the land that was affected by the Tsunami. He has committed to visit the center once a month and help coordinate the farms. The team along with Siddamma visited the farms he had worked with and saw the results themselves. They went to villages around Kaddalur that had completely converted to organic farming and were doing well. Siddamma will study the cow sheds more carefully to get experience. He was here to access the area and plan the landscape with the community of what can be done over time and over different months all round the year.

I then spoke to Siddamma and she mentioned that two of the staff are going to Kaddalur to learn more from these farms. She mentioned that Namalvar is working on recovery from the Tsunami for the next two months and can only visit them in the mean time. He is working on treating the land naturally. She explained the process briefly of using certain leaves and little water to soak out the salt to the surface and skim out the top. Then use gobar to layer the soil. He has used this process on over 150 acres of land so far and has been honored by Abdul Kalam. He has not received any financial support from anyone and working purely on his own accord. She was wondering if such a person can be supported through a fellowship or for travel since he has left his government job to work directly with the people at this time. She also mentioned that the group had planted 30-35 trees.

(- *Siddamma to send more information about this.*)

- *Need to look at the budget and what is required for a resource center.*