

Site Visit Report

Project Visited: Viswa Bharati Vidyodaya (<https://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=668>)

Supporting Chapter: Asha Colorado

Visited on: 7th April 2014

Visited by : Dr Padmanava Sen (padmanava.sen@gmail.com)

Project Description: Vidyodaya School is located near Gudalur in the western Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu. Currently 116 kids from kindergarten to 8th grade attend, 60 girls, 56 boys. Almost all are tribal. About 1/4 of the kids go home each afternoon to mud huts in the forest with no water or electricity. The school teaches standard curriculum in English, plus handicrafts, tribal traditions, and, for the older children, vocational skills. Every kid has free access to the nearby Adivasi hospital. Asha Colorado is seeking funds for operating the school bus and for teachers' salaries coming year.

Visit Details:

I have scheduled the visit a week in advance during my visit to Ooty. It is around 1 hr drive from Ooty. Gudalur city is in a way the center for multiple villages in that area since few state highways meet there. Rahul from Vidyodaya accompanied me all throughout the visit and I met Ms Durga before leaving the premises.

The NGO is well known in this area for their school and their Adivasi Hospital, within a km distance. They had a nurse-assistant training going on in the adivasi hospital to make the girls independent.

The school building has two parts in it - one is Sarva-Siksha-Abhijan-approved residential school and the other school is directly run by Vidyodaya following their own curriculum as of today. Rahul has updated me that the Vidyodaya school will cater to Class 1-5 only now to adhere to the RTE regulations. The higher class students will study in Government schools from this year onwards. The SSA - center runs on its own as a bridge center where first generation learners are enrolled and after 1-2 yrs, admitted to nearby government schools.

I have interacted with three Class 9 students. They were very shy but could communicate in English. They want to continue their education further and graduate from colleges. I have interacted lower class students - Class 7, 8 so forth. The students can express themselves in English and mentioned the things they do in the schools apart from studies. Given there is a good amount of space, they love playing in a group as well. They sang me few songs in their local languages. Rahul mentioned, they have to be proficient in 3 languages (local tribal language, Tamil and English). Lower class students were very busy in combining their study materials as it was last day of their academic year.

There are mainly students from four tribes. They come by the Jeep that Asha colorado is paying for. Without the Jeep they would not be able to attend the school.

The school has Libraries with english, Tamil and other books. The class rooms are spacious and there are all other amenities like drinking water and toilets available.

Ramdas was not able to be there since he had to travel to ooty where some of their class 10 students were sitting for exams. I met Ms Durga after the visit. We talked about the school and the hospital that is run by Vidyodaya. There are many foreign students that are involved with the NGO and doing short and long term internships. I met one of them from Germany in the school. I left for ooty after having a nutritious lunch in the guest house next to the hospital.