

Dear Friends at ASHA,

Thank you for expressing willingness in continuing to support us. In these challenging times, the certainty of such a partnership gives us some relief.

From when we spoke last, the CoVid second wave progressed quickly. And with it came new restrictions and lockdown guidelines. While Gudalur and Pandalur remained quite unaffected during the first wave, this time though we are seeing a steady increase in cases here. So, we have stopped field operations of the school and other programs to ensure safety for all. Parallely, we have also begun audio learning programs for children, teacher professional development delivered through the online medium, Community Youth Facilitator Training Program as well as village learning centres. So these are busy, engaging times filled with possibilities. Despite the many challenges, what continues to give us hope is the resilience we see among the teachers and the children. Even now, they continue to find newer approaches to working together with the children, without giving up.

Vidyodaya School's model towards navigating implications of CoVid on education

1. Balancing between remote learning and decentralized learning spaces at the village level

During the initial lockdown (CoVid first wave) We ran the remote learning program for 4 months in which we reached out and engaged with the children using whatsapp and SMS as the medium. But given its limited reach, issues around internet connectivity and unsuitability of this medium to facilitate learning among younger children, we decided to pivot our model of engaging with the children. This pivoting led us to decentralizing the school to the level of each village/ area where the children reside. And this has made it possible for the teachers to engage with all the 99 children, whereas the remote learning program allowed us to reach out to older children only. In this model, the teachers have been visiting the children and conducting learning sessions (following all safety measures) at the villages where the children reside twice every week. Parallely, to suit the needs and learning levels of the children in the current context, we are redesigning the content and learning tasks. We are also creating spaces for teachers' learning and professional development.

With continued closure of schools and uncertainty as to when they would reopen, and with the CoVid second wave peaking, we are prioritising being in touch with children than their learning goals. We have pivoted again, and we are planning to do this by leveraging phones and the IVRS software (these are automated voice recordings that do not require usage of the internet). Through the IVRS Platform, we have been sending stories, songs, riddles and CoVid-19 awareness to the older children. And once it is safe to travel, we plan to resume the village level classes while supplementing it with any tasks that can be sent through the phones.

2.Adivasi Youth Facilitator Training Program

Identifying and mobilising youth and running a training program to build their capabilities to work in education as teacher-leaders in their communities.

This program is aimed towards engaging with the youth, skill-building them as teachers and more importantly as community leaders. With continued closure of schools and uncertainty as to when they would reopen, what is certain is that community schools led by community youth will make a huge difference to the children, their well-being and learning. Looking at the long-term, we believe that having more people willing to work with children at the grassroots, at local community learning spaces is critical.

We have just begun training for the first batch of 10 adivasi youth, led by 2 program team members. We envision this to be a year long program and we are trying to make this work both online and offline. Parallely, while attending the training, these youth will also facilitate classes for children at their village too. To be able to support and invest the youth in their learning and development, we need funding to provide them with a modest stipend.

Request for Funding from ASHA | 2021-22

We usually use the funds from ASHA towards supporting travel of the children to school, but given we don't have any travel costs given school closures, we have decided to use the funds for another very critical program. For this year, we plan to leverage the funds from ASHA towards supporting the Youth Facilitator Training Program which aims to build community teacher-leaders. We have received funding from other partners as well towards these areas, but we still need funding. Your support will take us closer to our funding needs.

Adivasi Youth Facilitator Training Program

S.No	Description	Nos	Total Budget for 2021-22 (in INR)
1	Stipend for the trainees for the first three months	10	1,50,000
2	Salary for the youth facilitators (probation period of 9 months)	10	6,75,000
3	Training Materials	-	25000
4	Administrative Costs	-	54,000
	Total		9,04,000