

VISWA BHARATI VIDYODAYA TRUST, GUDALUR

Vidyodaya School

Vidyodaya School has become a Model for Tribal Education in India and even for other indigenous communities across the world. Last year Survival International has taken Vidyodaya as a case study for education in their forthcoming book on what kind of education should be provided to indigenous communities.

Vidyodaya is a Primary school, that is, it provides education up to class 5 only. As much as we would like to go up to Class 10, the present location does not allow for it. For this purpose VBVT has purchased land about 3 kms from the town of Gudalur where it plans to locate the new school building. The plans for this are under preparation.

This academic year, 2018-19, the school has had 7 new admissions taking the total number of students to 60. Last year 24 students completed their schooling here and left to join other schools. Admissions are not over yet.

As there are only 2 adivasi hamlets in the vicinity of the school, most of the children have to come from villages that are quite far and where they do not have schools or where the schools are not running well. Given below is the distance-wise distribution of children. The costs of transport has also increased by 40% in the last year with fuel prices being hiked up enormously.

Distance-wise student distribution April 2018 & June 2018:

Distance	No of students (June 17- April 18)	No of students (June 18)
0 – 5 km	28	18
5 – 10 km	9	9
11 – 15 km	0	0
15 – 20 km	40	33
Total	77	60

Maths & Science Resource Centre

This is a project that we have been very keen on initiating for a long time. As is well known Maths and Science are the weakest subjects, besides English, for the average child in India, and therefore there is a compelling need to have a hands-on kind of laboratory where children can actually do things and in the process learn concepts instead of cramming them.

We now have on board a young couple who have both completed engineering and afterward, one has done a Masters in Mathematics and the other in Science from the reputed Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai. Following this, they have both opted to work with the underprivileged children and so they joined the Teacher for India

programme, which is an off-shoot of the Teacher for America programme. They worked for two years in a government school in Chennai and then for two years in a rural school.

With their assistance we intend setting up a proper Laboratory which can cater to local schools and also a mobile one which we can take to other schools outside of Gudalur, especially to the government schools.

ADIVASI FOUNDATION COURSE - 2018-2019

Over the last two years of the Foundation Course a singular benefit has been the positive change in the capabilities of the training team which has improved immensely. More specifically, their maturity to handle and resolve issues of young people, their ability to build self-confidence and leadership through various activities including games, esp Ultimate Frisbee, their deep understanding of adivasi values and promoting them thereby building dignity in young people, their individual skills in terms a vocation, have all been noted. VBVT now feels that we need to take these, what we are calling Foundational Capabilities, forward.

It is also recognized that this is not enough for young people in the villages whom we have over the years encouraged to go to school. We need to offer them skills that will also give them a livelihood. Given the adivasi situation and culture, we feel that it is better to help them establish small jointly owned enterprises rather than train them to work under some one else and again end up at the bottom of the economic and social ladder. However, this call for not just a vocational skill, but also managerial skills and marketing skills.

The Team, having had these two years experience, is at present ready to undertake any course in Foundational Skills and Values. This is a service that VBVT is now offering to anyone who wishes to have it as a course.

- One programme that is on hand, is a request from ASHWINI that their new batch of Auxiliary Nurse-Midwife (ANM) trainees (21 of them) be given a 45-day training in these Values and skills and VBVT has agreed to do so. A very structured course has been started for these students since the beginning of August.

- The second programme that has been planned is to work with the government's Industrial Training Institute (ITI). The ITI is sponsored by the Dept of Tribal Welfare and is meant exclusively for adivasis of Gudalur. It has been running now for a few years but it had no equipment, only theory classes. This year the equipment has been installed and a hostel for all the students too is being constructed. The ITI runs a programme for 105 students in 5 different skills. VBVT has decided to work along with the ITI and assist these 105 students in providing them with life-skills and also afterwards finding direction in their lives as most of them dropout or go into other jobs unrelated to their skills. This means that VBVT does not have to have a residential course as it has done in the past.

The ITI administration has welcomed the idea and we are working out how to take this forward.

Other such programmes may come up and VBVT will consider given the constraints of commitments and time.

The Team also plans to develop a curriculum for enterprise for young people. Once one or two of these have been set up, then the team will begin a process of encouraging young people to initiate their enterprises. However, they will be incubated by the team for a period of time and then they will be helped to go out on their own. So this programme envisages not just the training in entrepreneurial development but it will also be an incubation centre.

Over the years we have developed people with sufficient motivational skills. This has been a huge strength of our organizations. We also know that a range of vocational skills are also available, like the nursing skills, teaching skills or soap-making and so on. However, to be able to couch these vocational skills with the adivasis values and the motivation to keep the community together and take it forward, is something we have not done sufficiently. As a large number of young people are getting educated and looking to new avenues of life, we need to ensure that they continue to live in dignity in their vocations they choose to do. Self-reliance has been the corner-stone of all the work with the community here and these enterprises are specifically targeted in that direction.

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