The government has re-started funding of VTCL and VTTRC (confirm this) after heavy lobbying by Dr Balu (founder of SVYM). So the funding situation for now is stabilized.

The integration of VTCL and VTTRC is going well. This re-structuring was done as part of the efforts to reduce costs after the abrupt withdrawal of government funding for VTCL and VTTRC last year. Some components of VTTRC and the VTCL primary school are now managed together administratively, and VTTRC students now play a bigger role in the primary and upper primary classes. This reduces costs of teachers at VTCL, and helps VTTRC students get more practical hands-on experience. It gives them exposure to teaching in a classroom from early on. VTTRC students start working with VTCL classes from almost the time they start the course.

Two of the teachers were engaged with class II during my visit. They worked well with the kids, and the kids were comfortable with them. The children in the class were working with Legos. With great pride they showed me what they were building. They were not in the least bit shy, and with a lot of confidence demanded my attention to their piece. As always I wondered – children are so confident and articulate when they are young. But what happens in the education system that they lose the confidence they have as young children? The tribal children in particular (compared to children in other schools) confidently interact with adults, till the system teaches them to be submissive and quiet. I discussed this with Mr. Kumar, who has been with the school for a long time. We didn’t arrive at any particular answer. (I squarely blame the nature of the Indian education system, with its focus on exams and rote memorization without a need for understanding concepts, and content that is often alien to the child’s surroundings. In spite of VTCL’s efforts the system doesn’t nurture the innate confidence and intelligence, the system does the opposite. It would be a real breakthrough if VTTRC graduates are able to keep up the children’s enthusiasm and confidence in spite of the Indian education system, and if they are different from other teachers in this regard. I think no other D.Ed college achieves this.

This is one other thing we could try to track long term among VTTRC graduates when they are working as teachers. In the short term we can explore whether this is a focus area for VTTRC and how it is implemented. Teachers having a good rapport with the children, as I observed in the class I visited, is one step in this direction.)

I also met the teachers in the “budding” teacher program (after finishing their coursework) at a different project (Deenabandhu School). Deenabandhu School is in a nearby district (it has also been an Asha project in the past, and its government school outreach activities are now supported by the Oracle grant that Asha helped them get). Five teachers were staying at Deenabandhu to get practical hands on experience teaching. During my visit to Deenabandhu I got a chance to interact with them. They also were exposed to talks and other activities that Deenabandhu organizes on a regular basis (I was part of a panel during one of my visits). It is a good development that the VTTRC graduates are exposed to excellent non-profit schools like Deenabandhu.
She was very proud of her creation!
No one was shy.
Class II with two VTTRC students helping the class.