This is the annual report with progress documented between April 2009 to March 2010. For more information please contact the stewards of the project.

Welcome to our 5th annual report. In this issue we give you an overview of our successes and challenges in Education, Healthcare, Employment and Community - our areas of interest as part of our integrated rural development vision.

**Education**

We have made significant progress in our efforts with promoting primary education. Some of the highlights of our achievements are:

**Infrastructure** – We worked with Build Future India, Action 2020 and Vijay cements to upgrade the flooring, build toilets and put compounds in Nathakkadu and Thottiapatti schools. With the help of Tamil Nadu Foundation 5 Anganwadis now use Envirofit stoves that have drastically cut down the amount of toxic fumes, cooking time and firewood required. We also setup a kitchen garden at Nathakkadu that grows season vegetables for use in the school kitchen. These measures have made the environment for the children more safe and healthy.

**After school** – The year started with us organizing a very successful summer camp that drew 50 students for period of 1 month. Activities included glass painting, silambattam, kolattam, puppet shows computer games and many more field games – ending in a grand stage show within the village. The other big occasion of kids to look beyond their books was cultural & sports programs organized with Team Everest sponsorship for 10 schools in around Thenur, Thottiyapatti, Nathakkadu. About 900 participation certificates & prizes were distributed! Lastly our computer centre has been drawing eager computer gamers and painters from the local school after the school hours.

**E-learning** - Buoyed by our success in attracting after school children we have started classes using video conferencing facility. We have had excellent support from our e-tutors Ms. Sujatha (English – 6-8th), Mr. Angaraj (Maths – 6-8th), Mr. Sathish V (accounts– for XI & XII & B.Com) and Mr. Venkat (computers & Tally – for Payir staff). In addition to help our tutors teaching from the convenience of their home, we have also setup a dedicated e-learning centre at Mambalam (thanks to Action2020 group), that our tutors can use.

**Child welfare** – The morning breakfast scheme we started at Thottiapatti has had excellent results and hence we extended it to Thenur AD school. Voluntary contributions
usually come on the occasion of donor’s birthday and anniversary celebrations. This program has played a critical role in garnering support of the villagers and teachers of existing schools. We urge the support of our donors to this cause. The children of Thenur middle, AD welfare and Thottiyapatti schools also received school uniforms, notes and slippers through the generous support of our founder chairman and Rotary club (Esplanade, Chennai)

_Tutors_ – The tutors were taken on visits to help them see and learn from other institutions working in area of rural education. Visits of Vijaya aunty to the ashram have been especially a boon since it has given our teachers (and students of X & XII) to learn and speak English.

We have been able to gain the confidence of school and teachers. They now actively participate in our programs. However one of the areas of challenge is that we are yet to instill in parents the importance and value of children’s education. This will be major area of focus for us going forward. E-learning has helped us garner sustained support of volunteers from a broader audience. This in effect has helped us in continuously engaging with the children.

**Health care**

The last year has seen us making significant progress in our healthcare initiative. Some highlights of our progress:

_Capacity building_ – Mythili a trained medical paramedic, physiotherapist and acupuncture specialist joined us in April. Since then she has take up the responsibilities to run day to day operations of the hospital and leading the overall healthcare. She manages the interaction with the doctors and hospitals (in Trichy) for the patients. We were also joined by health workers who come from the villages of Varatharajapuram, Thenur, Thottiyapatti, Nathakadu in May. They underwent a training under Mythili for 6 months and now are able to serve as first responders for the health needs of each of their villages.

_Health Camps_ – As part of the health initiative we conducted many health camps this past year. Siva anna did a physiotherapy and orthopedic camp covering 8 villages and over 180 people. Additionally we also used an Annadanam by a friend to organize a health camp for the senior citizens. During the event we gathered their vital health statistics along with the status of their old age pension. Lastly Rotary club Esplanade, Chennai helped in organizing a medical camp across 5 different specialties (General medicine/Pediatrics, Eye, ENT, Gynecology, Dental) with 10 doctors. As many as 630 patients across 10 villages benefited from the event.
Outreach – Apart from providing health care through the hospital we also reach out the community to provide antenatal care (monthly weighing, high risk pregnancy, immunization), postnatal care (guidance on breastfeeding, meal planning), care of patients with chronic diseases and general health visits. More recently we have started working with the Anganwadis to chart the growth of babies and to monitor under-nourishment. Our health workers are using their close links with the villagers to ensure babies undergo regular vaccination and are also provided the health supplements.

Health Education - As part of spreading health awareness among children Dr. Sridhar distributed first aid kits among the 5 panchayat schools we service. In each of these schools we have formed a 5 student (each one resp. for 1) school health committee that was trained to provide first aid. We have provided dustbins in 5 schools (sponsored by Team Everest) and are encouraging the collection of waste and safe composting rather than open burning. Lastly we are working with adolescent girls to help them understand personal hygiene and physiological changes.

Referral network/Tele-medicine – Though we have been able to setup a good referral network, the frequency of visit by doctors coming down to the villages has gone down. To overcome this one of the areas we have tapped into is the Tele-medicine. Currently Dr. Shantha Mohan (dermatologist) attends to patients using the webcam at the clinic. We would like to expand this for general medicine.

The good rapport we have developed amongst the villagers, anganwadi workers and school teachers over the year should translate into more tangible results in the coming year. In this part year we have moved away from care at hospital to a more community health approach. For example our outreach programs helped in identifying two cases of cancer – however a more regular program with better focus could have resulted in a positive outcome. In the schools we have seen increased usage of toilets but continued reinforcement of health & hygiene is important to sustain this. Lastly we see Tele-medicine as a means of overcoming the trend in declining doctor visits to villages.

Employment
On the employment generation front we tried producing Neem based organic fertilizer. This year we have been able to supply over 3.5 tons to IIT (Chennai) providing part time employment to 3 people for 2 months. We plan to introduce this as yearly supplemental source income.
Our computer data entry has had decline in projects due the poor economic conditions; we hope with the economy picking up things will look better. We have also ventured into free ranging poultry – an initial pilot has shown promise.
Community

Thenur and surrounding areas are mainly rain-fed and last 3 years of sparse rains have wrecked havoc on agriculture and our social forestry initiative. If you recall we had planted hundreds of trees as part the effort on temple lands in Thenur, these are under distress currently. As a first step to your water shed management we worked with Dr. Sivagnam to obtain satellite images of nearby tanks and waterways. We will need to the support of volunteers to convert this into a meaningful project that has ability to transform life of Thenur and surrounding villages.

We also facilitated in the creation of a Panchayat Level federation constituting the 15 Self-groups of Thenur panchayat. Now, it has an elected representative structure managing the functioning of individual groups.