

Review 2020-21 & Budget 2021-22



Annual Review 2020-21

It is a cliché to use the word ‘unprecedented’ to describe the year that went by; then, there isn’t a better word either. After a first full year in the new campus, Thulir was served with a shock of closing the campus for the almost the entire year. For most of 2020-21, the village of Sittlingi did not see anyone affected by COVID-19 as such. Then, the economic implications due to lockdown was severe. The State Government never allowed the primary schools to reopen during the entire year and relied on online schooling and classes through television channel - neither of them worked for students of Sittlingi and the neighbouring villages.

Given the challenging situation, Thulir rose to the occasion with a few alternatives. After keeping the school closed till June last year, they opened it up for the teachers to visit the school and skill themselves. They invited parents in small groups and held discussions on how to tackle the situation. Most parents were already troubled with economic difficulties and could not spend much time thinking about their children’s future. It was then Thulir offered to start decentralised schools in different villages.

In early February, I had a chance to visit Thulir for the first time during the year. You can read my detailed annual review for the year here - https://ashadocserver.s3.amazonaws.com/967_AnnualReview2021.pdf

During the same time, Anjana from Asha Bangalore also visited Thulir. Her report can be found here - https://ashadocserver.s3.amazonaws.com/967_Thulir-Sitevisit.pdf

Utilisation of Funds 2020-21

	Budget		Actuals	
Salaries	₹	11,16,000	₹	11,25,300
Nutrition expenses	₹	3,00,000	₹	2,16,945
Resource person expenses	₹	50,000	₹	52,600
Travel Expenses	₹	30,000	₹	42,557
Telephone and Communication	₹	5,000	₹	7,041
Vehicle Maintenance	₹	20,000	₹	11,603
Campus Maintenance	₹	10,000	₹	58,914
Teaching materials	₹	35,000	₹	22,470
Total	₹	15,66,000	₹	15,37,430

Notes:

1. Nutrition expenditure is lower than the budget as the kitchen was closed for the initial few months. After the teachers resumed their work, the kitchen was reopened for teachers and the lunch and snacks were served. The kitchen staff were paid in full during the year.
2. Travel expenses - Unlike previous year, there was very little travel to other places for field visits, approval process etc., There was an additional expense in fuel expenses as some of the teachers had to travel to remote villages (upto 10-12Kms

from the school premises). I was informed about using the budget to pay for the fuel costs of teachers using their own vehicle. Since, it was only a transfer within the same expense head, I had agreed for the same.

3. Resource person expenses - It was not utilised for the similar purposes as last year. There were few visitors like Ramasubramanian, Varun who conducted informal classes during the year. It was also used to pay a civil engineer engaged with projects in early part of the year when there was not much construction work. Subsequently, they started the construction work after funding from Asha Bangalore, Asha Irvine, and other donors.
4. Campus Maintenance - Additional expenses include engaging a new person to take care of the campus in the absence of regular school. It was agreed that this will be dealt separately from the current year.
5. Teaching materials - The balance from the budget would be used in the current year.

Budget 2021-22

	2021-22		2020-21	
Salaries	₹	12,44,600	₹	11,16,000
Nutrition expenses	₹	3,00,000	₹	3,00,000
Resource person expenses	₹	50,000	₹	50,000
Travel Expenses	₹	50,000	₹	30,000
Telephone and Communication	₹	10,000	₹	5,000
Vehicle Maintenance	₹	15,000	₹	20,000
Campus Maintenance	₹	10,000	₹	10,000
Teaching materials	₹	30,000	₹	35,000
Total	₹	17,09,600	₹	15,66,000

Notes:

1. Break-up of Salaries

	2021-22	2020-21	Remarks
Anuradha	₹ 2,16,000	₹ 2,10,000	
Ramkumar		₹ 1,44,000	Ram wants to explore other opportunities during the year and prefer not to be paid. He will be engaged in education and would like to gain more experience from other schools before getting back to Thulir.

	2021-22	2020-21	Remarks
Archana	₹ 1,02,000		Archana, wife of Ram, was partly engaged in earlier years. Her second daughter is joining the school son and she is keen to being more active with the school.
Rajammal	₹ 1,30,800	₹ 1,22,400	Standard increase of Rs. 8,400
Ravi	₹ 1,21,200	₹ 1,12,800	Standard increase of Rs. 8,400
Sakthivel	₹ 1,02,200	₹ 1,14,000	He is likely to be engaged only later during the year. He left Sittlingi during middle of last year and is expected to move back later this year
Lakshmi	₹ 96,000	₹ 87,600	Standard increase of Rs. 8,400
Sasikala	₹ 96,000	₹ 87,600	Standard increase of Rs. 8,400
Chitra	₹ 96,000	₹ 87,600	Standard increase of Rs. 8,400
Sindamani	₹ 96,000	₹ 87,600	Standard increase of Rs. 8,400
Jeevila	₹ 78,000	₹ 62,400	She has finished her two year training period and now gets included in the teachers' scales and so has a higher increase
Suresh	₹ 62,400		New teacher. Profiles in the annexure.
Jadaiyan	₹ 48,000		Full-time campus caretaker; It would be eventually be a party of campus maintenance budget taken up separately.
	₹ 12,44,600	₹ 11,16,000	

I am enclosing a brief profiles of the teachers in the Annexure. Earlier this year, Dr. Ravi, one of the trustees of Thulir, shared

their philosophy behind deciding pay for different teachers. I am also sharing it as an Annexure.

2. The lunch expenses for students are on shared basis. Parents are asked to contribute either in cash or in kind, but not insisted upon. The budget under this head contributes to food for staff, volunteers, guests, and any deficit arising out of shortage from students' contributions.

3. All other expense heads have been retained at same levels as previous year. They are well aware of the current crisis and will continue to exercise prudence in their expenditure during the year.

4. The total number of students to be enrolled is expected to be about 60.

Discussions on Budget

1. Need for a additional staff:

I would like to first present the view of the project partner:

Two reasons why we need additional staff.

A) All our teachers have to be trained from scratch for at least three years before they start actually contributing. So in the beginning years of the school when the numbers of pupils are small, it is better to have the teachers and train them and prepare them for later when the numbers increase. One cannot suddenly get a capable group of teachers when the numbers increase.

B) Even now, we don't have 10 teachers for 53 students. With the field classes the number of students we are handling is more. Also most of my (Anu) time goes in co ordinating other people and their work. Half of both Ravi and Ram's time goes in running around for government approval. (There are more and more renewals and approvals to be got every day!). Sakthivel 's time goes in campus management, purchases, taking care of the guests and kitchen. More than half of Archana' s time goes in handling accounts. And Jadaiyan is the security person and campus in-charge.

My observation is that it is quite impossible to recruit anyone with specific needs or sterling credentials, given the location and other constraints. Hence, most of the teachers have to be “home-grown” alongside enthusiastic people from outside like Ram and Archana. Some of them have settled well over the years - Rajamma, Ravi, Chitra etc., whereas few others progress slowly. Anu places adequate emphasis on having a harmonious team and they blend

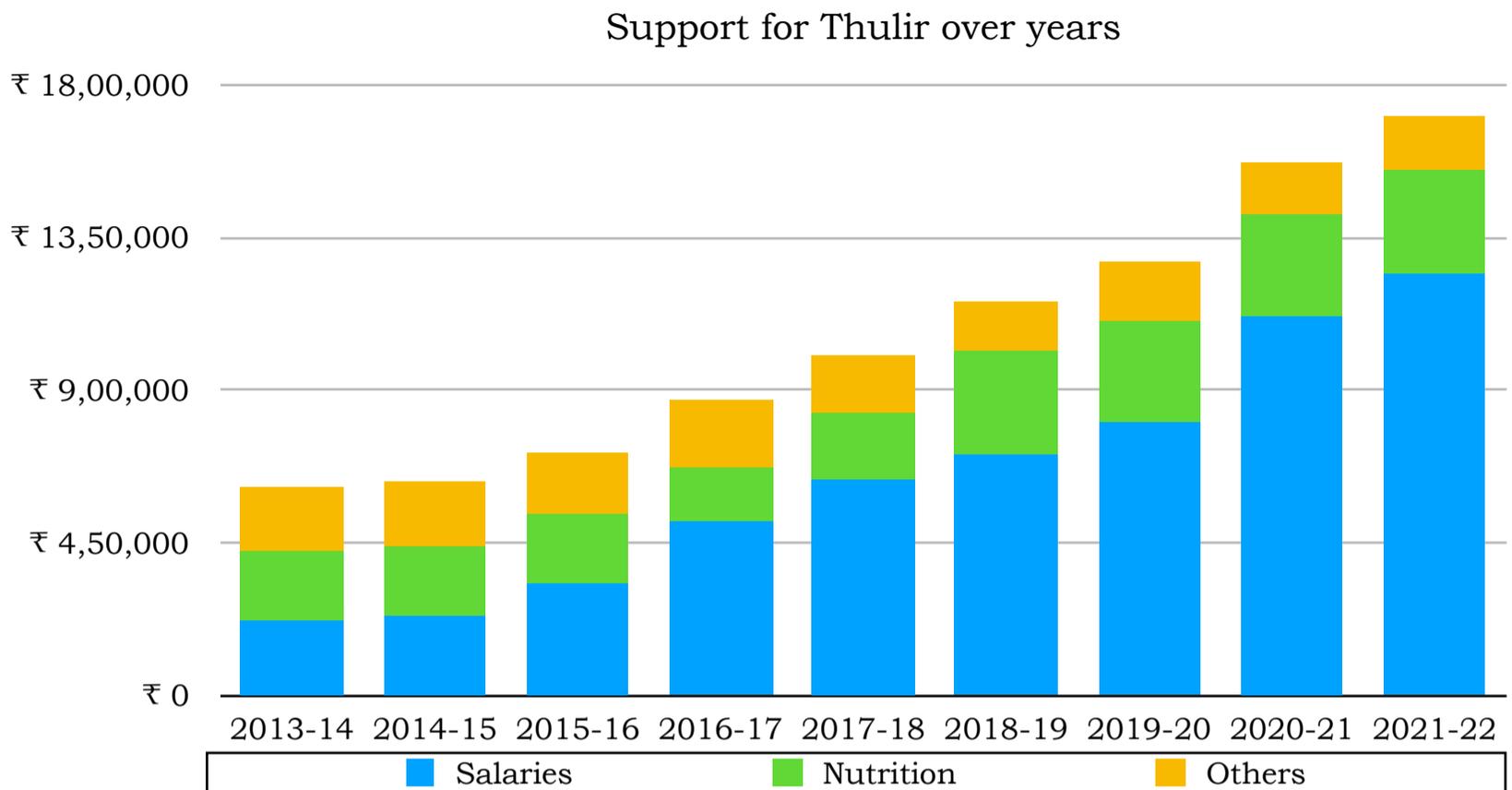
along well. Their contributions go beyond classroom - Some of them rose to the occasion during COVID times. I am confident that sooner or later, presence of every additional teacher will be justified and the number of students will increase correspondingly. Since they cater to very young children, getting compassionate teachers is more helpful than 'skilled' teachers.

2. Campus Maintenance - The increase in budget was bound to happen sooner or later. The campus requires a separate maintenance budget at some point of time. Our suggestion/recommendation was to find a sponsor/donor exclusively for the purposes of maintaining the campus. They could be acknowledged by prominently displaying that the campus is maintained through funds from that donor.

Until end of 2019-20, one of the teachers was staying at the campus with her husband, who acted as a care-taker. They have left after the COVID outbreak to go back to their village and engage in farming.

3. Given the current pandemic, emphasis was placed on the need to incorporate mental health assessment for both students and teachers, whenever possible.

Overview of Asha's Budget support for Thulir over the last 9 years



Suggested further reading:

1. Thulir Blogs/News Letter - <http://www.thulir.org/wp/blog/>
2. Interaction with Priti David on the book, 'Coming Home' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghyMOPsZUro>

Annexure - Profiles of Teachers

- 1. Anuradha** - Anu 'chithi', as she is popularly called by the children, is the founder of Thulir. An architect by qualification, her interests in education triumphs her interests in architecture, which she also practices now and then, including on the Thulir campus. She, along with her husband Krishna, were Asha Fellows for more than a decade and half, supported by Asha Princeton, which is in the process of closure. She starts taking salary from this year.
- 2. Archana** - Archana, along with Ram moved to Sittlingi in late 2016. She has two daughters - Sharada, already a student in Thulir and Chaitanya, who is likely to join Thulir from current year. She was earlier helping in the administration of the school on pro-bono basis. From the current year, she will be handling some of the classes.
- 3. Rajammal** - Hailing from Sittling, she has been with Thulir for over a decade now, first as a student in the Basic Technology program and now as a teacher. One of the first teachers for the school, she is now a graduate. Her son, Rishi, also studies in Thulir.
- 4. Shaktivel** - Also a student of Thulir, he takes care of day-to-day administration and errand jobs related to the school .Very popular among the younger children (and with anyone visiting Thulir!), he also handles the sports related activities. He also trains some of the boys in the village for running events.
- 5. Ravi** - Ravi joined Thulir in 2014 and has a B.Ed. Degree. His wife works as a nurse in the THI and his son studies in Thulir.
- 6. Lakshmi** - She was a student of Thulir in the evening classes. She has been trained in Thulir for the past 5 years. She was away during last year on Maternity leave.
- 7. Sasikala** - She joined Thulir when her daughter joined the pre-school program.
- 8. Chitra** - She posses a D.T.Ed. (Diploma). She was earlier working as a teacher in neighbouring village.

9. Sindhamani - She is a graduate with B.Ed. qualifications.

10. Jeevila - Jeevila joined last year. She hails from S. Thathampatti, about 15 Kms from the school. She is a graduate with a diploma in Teachers Training and worked at a private school in Kottapatti for sometime.

11. Suresh - Suresh hails from Palakkuttai village but has grown mostly outside, as his father worked with the Railways. He holds an M.A in English with a B.Ed degree and got married recently.

Annexure - Compensation Philosophy

1. Salaries are calculated weighing the years of schooling, graduation, teacher training or any other training relevant for teachers. Though this is far from ideal, this is the best we could do to have an objective way of setting salaries for the present and future teachers. Please see the table below.

Basic Pay	Rs 2000
Years of schooling	Rs 100/yr
Finished 12th	Rs 300
Graduation-correspondence	Rs 300/yr
Graduation-full time	Rs 400/yr
Bachelor of education (B.ed)	Rs 600
Diploma Teacher training	Rs 400/yr
Experience outside	Rs 150/yr
Experience inside	Rs 300/yr
Basic Technology course (Thulir)	Rs 800
Skills training	Rs 300/yr
Post graduation-full time	Rs 400/yr
PG- correspondence	Rs 300/yr

2. Even as the district bureaucracy requires formal education or teacher training to become a teacher, unfortunately it does not reflect good knowledge or skills. Moreover working with the tribal community, we look for teachers who are able to understand their culture and context and respect their existing knowledge and wisdom. Hence most of our teachers are local, who have been associated with Thulir for several years and who understand the values and principles of Thulir. Most of our senior teachers have very little formal education but have been trained in Thulir and are very good with children.

3. This is also the reason why we have given more weightage for training (Basic technology course that was conducted by Thulir- most of our senior teachers came through that!), or work experience in Thulir so as to keep them at par with the outside trained teachers. Moreover most of Thulir salaries are still less than the minimum wages and our teachers are underpaid for the work, still struggling to meet ends. We salute their dedication and passion.

4. The yearly increments are done equally for everybody like Rs 500/ raise for all instead of a percentage of salaries which we feel is unfair for reasons you know well.

5. Considering that Thulir salaries are meagre and that our teachers come from very poor backgrounds, Thulir deposits one month salary for all the teachers as long term savings for their use in emergencies.