

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 1, 2015, 11:00 AM

Title of Meeting: Meeting with Project Holders of Thulir

Location: Lal Bagh, Bengaluru

Attendees: Aanchal, Ankush, Ajay, Neha (ASHA Volunteers); Balaji (Project Steward); Anu & Krishna (Project Holders)

Background

Thulir is an Education Resource Center for children and young adults at Sittilingi, a tribal village in Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu. ASHA Bangalore has been supporting Thulir since 2008 and the project holders, Anu and Krishna are ASHA Fellows supported by ASHA Princeton. The project has been in existence since 2004 and has undergone changes in their activities due to the change in the education scene in the village.

More about ASHA's involvement in the project page - <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=967> and about the fellowship in this page - <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=601>. More about Thulir in the project page - www.thulir.org.

Objective

The meeting was facilitated for the benefit of ASHA volunteers to know more about the project, the activities undertaken by Thulir and the proposed metamorphosis of the Learning Centre to a full-fledged School.

Minutes

Anu and Krishna spoke about their first arrival at Sittling, their academic and work background and the need for establishment of Thulir. A brief overview was provided about the perception of education amongst the Village people during the early days of Thulir and the current situation. There is increased awareness about the importance of education but it is more focused towards getting degrees and certificates than an effort to 'learn'. While this leads to students aspiring to finish their schooling and get into Colleges, the real learning in them has not significantly improved.

After settling down in Sittling, Anu embarked on a study of education in the tribal valley in which the village is located. The idea of inculcating an education that would help them to be self sufficient and lead a life with self-esteem and self-respect was deemed to be apt in the region. They adopted the

system practiced in Vigyan Ashram, Pabal. This led to the start of Basic Technology Course in 2008. The course was aimed at school drop-outs who normally migrated for menial labour work in inhuman conditions. The course has lost its charm in recent years as there are very few school drop-outs due to the changes in the education system. The present system incentivises students to continue education beyond school and the failure rates in high school examinations are dwindling.

Thulir was also organising after-school program for school going children. This was actively undertaken for many years and children enjoyed an atmosphere where they can learn without any fear and in their own pace. More details about these program has been covered in our earlier site visit reports. This program is currently affected by the increased working hours in the Government school which results in very little time for the Children to spend in Thulir.

Thulir has also started a pre-school program on an experimental basis couple of years back. The present thought is to extend the pre-school into a full-fledged school. An outline of the list of activities in bringing the school into force was presented:

- ➔ A proposal to organise a management committee with parents, staff from THI hospital and teachers is to be formed which will be involved in the day-to-day management of the school.
- ➔ Many trips have been undertaken to study schools of similar model like Puvudham in Dharmapuri district, Marudham in Thiruvannamalai and Vidya Vanam, Anaikatti and their models are being explored.
- ➔ For the coming academic year, efforts are on to start class I & II. The present pre-school can also handle children going to kindergarden.
- ➔ All efforts to be made to make the school RTE compliant. The land required to start a school under the Act will also be purchased and efforts are made towards it.
- ➔ Teachers - The present staff of Thulir like Rajamma, Shakthivel, Ravi (who possess B.Ed qualification) and Nikhil (a volunteer from Bangalore), who have been trained in Thulir for many years, can form the initial team of teachers. Senthil, another student groomed by Thulir in secretarial work will handle administration related issues.

Funding from ASHA

The donations from ASHA are largely used for paying the salary of the staff who are likely to be engaged in similar activity, whether it is school or the present evening program. A detailed report will be presented by Balaji ahead of the budget for 2015-16 on the changes in the project and the nature of expenditure.

Pictures from the Meeting

