

# Site Visit Report - August 2019

I visited Thulir between August 26-29, 2019 as a part of my annual site visit and would like to report on the following activities. Incidentally, it is 10 years since I visited Thulir for the first time and needless to say, much has changed!

## **Construction Update:**

Since the inauguration of the new campus in January this year, priority was assigned to construction of kitchen in the new premises. The building comprises of two rooms and an open space for preparation and cooking. The kitchen is now fully functional.



The next two buildings in the campus are the dining hall and Library. The Library and resource centre are planned for the benefit of not just the school but also the community in large.

## **School Certification**

The progress in getting recognition for the school has been slow due to cumbersome procedures and government hierarchies. All the requisite certificates like structural safety, fire safety, sanitary certificate, etc., has been obtained and the Block Education Officer, Harur, has inspected the site. He has forwarded the application to District Education Officer who, after review, will send it to Chennai for final approval.

## **Input Metrics for Project Quantification**

Input metrics as proposed by Asha for Education, has been obtained and submitted to the central projects team.

## **Fellowship of Anu and Krishna**

Asha Princeton has been supporting the fellowship of Anu and Krishna since December 2004 - <https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=601> The chapter is undergoing reorganisation and has reduced the fellowship amount by half during this financial year. Further, there is no clarity on the continuation of the fellowship due to change in volunteers at Asha Princeton. The fellowship amount is sent to Thulir and it not only supported Anu and Krishna, but also few other volunteers who contributed through the year. A sudden

reduction in funding is certainly concerning. It has been since taken up with the central projects team and is up for review.

### **Interaction with Teachers**

Teachers' salaries constitute roughly 85% of the funds supported by Asha and it was important for me to meet the teachers and listen to their views. I had a good discussion on topics like their work in general, workplace conditions (most of them are excited about the new campus), opportunities for professional development, salaries, and also about the support from Asha. Most teachers are happy about the flexibility offered to them in the choice of what to teach, the mutual trust in the organisation built over years; and exposure provided through interaction with people from varied backgrounds and other outstation trips. Discussions were held about their roles beyond the school work and how they see themselves in the society.

### **New Teacher - Jeevila**

Ms. Jeevila 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. She was encouraged to join Thulir by many of her friends and family in her village who were appreciative of the way the school treats the children. She likes that discipline is not forced on children and they are taught to adhere to it.

### **Typical day at School**

I spent two days observing the regular activities of the school. A typical day for the school starts with a circle at 9:00 AM with recitals of Thirukkural, few folk songs, and sharing of thoughts by teachers and students. It is followed by some gardening and campus cleaning. The first session lasts between 10:00 AM and 11:15 AM before they take a break for snacks session. The next academic session is from 11:30 AM and lasts for an hour. The pre-lunch session would be interactive and nutritious lunch (made from millets and vegetables) is at 1:30 PM. Post lunch, there would be sessions on craft, story-telling, and some subjects before they move to the ground at 3:15 PM. The school ends by 4:15 PM.

### **10 years on...**

It is 10 years since I visited Sittlingi for the first time in June 2009 (a cycling trip). However, it was August 2009 when I got to spend a longer time interacting with the students from Basic Technology Course. Thulir has changed a long way since then, in line with the requirements of the village. The students back then have now become adults and their children are studying now at Thulir! The connectivity to the village in terms of roads and public transport has not changed significantly. Telecommunications still remain a challenge and dwindling water levels on account of poor choices in agriculture has a telling effect on the village. Many children over the past decade have obtained degrees (mostly graduates) but it does not seem to have a significant impact in the fortunes of the village.

### **More Resources:**

1. Recent Thulir Blog - <http://www.thulir.org/wp/2019/06/newsletter-jan-june-2019/>
2. Photos from site visit - <https://photos.app.goo.gl/7SgZZ9rFLRHX5sRK6>