

Visit to Thulir - April 2013

I visited Thulir between April 10-12, 2013. The visit also coincided with the visit of Santhosh Padmanabhan to Thulir. I could also spend some time with Anu and rest of the staff and discuss about the activities in Thulir.

Training for Running Events

Children from the village assemble for their morning run. Running amongst the students of Thulir started back in 2008 when Santhosh started training Senthil for a marathon in 2008. The impact of running on Senthil and other students in terms of their confidence has been well documented and served as one of the inspiration behind Santhosh in starting running programs for children in various other institutions (<http://www.runnershighkids.blogspot.in/2009/07/first-step.html>)



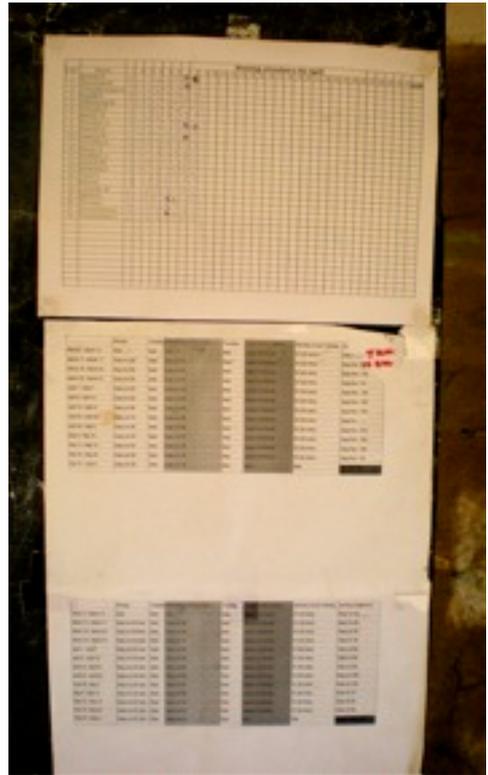
The journey in to running has taken different forms over the past 4 years. I have been personally involved during their visits to running events and has seen the numbers dwindle over the past few years. The change in number is also closely linked to the change in the

activities of Thulir. Running as an activity was largely prevalent amongst the elder children, who are often drawn into formal schooling or agricultural activities during morning hours. The recent wave of running is more associated with the school-going children. After enthusiastic participation from a larger group in events at Chennai and Auroville, more children has been attracted towards running. Children above 10 years are invited to train for the 10K event in the first week of June. This has been drawing interest from children from nearby villages which had to be declined for logistical reasons. All children promptly report for the morning run before 5:30 AM. They are put into basic warm-up drills followed by some running before finishing with basic

stretches. Senthil, Sakthivel, Dhanapal and Paramesh guide them through this routine. The training plan has been prepared by Santhosh, who personally led the sessions on April 11. He introduced a few games associated with running.

After the morning running, which concludes anytime between 6:30-7:00 AM, some students stay back to do their school lessons with Anu. Some other students stay back to play football or volleyball. The daily attendances are taken and only regular students will be allowed to participate in running events. This program has been initiated and managed largely by the staff of Thulir with very little guidance from Anu and Krishna. It serves as an additional offering for the development of school-going children and as a program independently managed by the Staff.

Most of the recent trips to running events has been undertaken by the staff on their own with very little assistance from outsiders.



Classes with school-going children

The evening classes organised for the school-going children are now largely handled by the staff



of Thulir under guidance from Anu. Perumal has rejoined Thulir and is likely to start courses on electronics for children. Senthil is continuing with his classes on Computers. During examinations, these children also get assistance in their preparations. On April 11, the children attended the classes during the morning session. It was a holiday because of *Ugadi* and hence, the children were present during the

morning. Santhosh conducted the classes on measuring heart rate and lung capacity using simple experiments that the students can understand. Despite the presence of a similar institution in the

village (which offers many freebies), Thulir still attracts many children due to a friendly atmosphere, better infrastructure and opportunities for self-initiated learning.



Staff Development

On other days, Krishna and Anu spend the morning time with classes to the staff in various aspects related to managing Thulir, organic farming, technology and others. There has also been assistance from visitors in imparting education to them. Santhosh shared his experiences from Sita School and Ananya with staff which proved valuable for them to incorporate in their lessons.

Enterprise Development

The initiative to develop an agro-based enterprise has been presently curtailed due to severe draught conditions prevailing in the region. The existing team is still eager to revive it once the weather improves. The cows are maintained at their homes due to lack of fodder at Thulir.

Crèche Activities

The Crèche was started on an experimental basis with 4 children and continues to operate from the present Thulir campus. This activity is likely to be shifted soon to a different place.

Finances and Annual Budget

Thulir received the second installment of the funds disbursed late during the year. It was suggested that they can present a budget for the whole year as early as possible with periodical review. Thulir is closed for summer vacation in May and would resume their activities in June. The budget would prepared after discussions with the staff.