

Thulir

Newsletter – August 04

Greetings from Sittilingi.

Here's an update on happenings in Thulir during August.

Regularizing Attendance:

We felt a need to have regular sessions on math, English and Tamil. But the group was big with a lot of floating population. We found that a lot of children's attendance was erratic. We were debating whether we should weed out some children who are not so regular. But we also felt some of these people might need our inputs more badly [as their not coming regularly could be due to difficult circumstance at home, the need to look after younger siblings and or the land etc.]. To coincide with our debating on what measures to take, the local church started a morning and evening tuition cum free meal programme for some Sittilingi children this month and so a few of the children have gone off there, thereby reducing strength. We also found that a few children [especially boys of class 9th and 10th] were coming late, playing football and leaving. This was a difficult group to manage partly because they go to a Kottapatti school, and their having to prepare for the public examination. They would also disturb the other motivated kids. We have asked them to stop coming from 4pm to 7pm when the other children are there. To these children we have offered to take classes after 7.30 pm and also after 3 pm on Saturdays.

Mohan and Senthil, the class 10 boys now come at 2 pm to Thulir and they have exclusive classes till 4 pm when the first of the children start arriving.

We have now 25 to 35 children coming in a day. This is just manageable and we are now ready to have structured lesson plans in place. These lessons cover only a part of the schedule, leaving enough space for art, reading and discussing newspapers, [which ends up as an impromptu science or geography or history lesson!], and self study by the children [to read story cards, browse National Geographic etc., and sometimes do their homework/prepare for class tests in their school.

The Saturday schedule

Saturdays sessions have become more enjoyable. They start around 9.30 am and we are able to take long sessions, and do various activities without having to keep an eye on the clock. The children seem to look forward to this day. They bring their lunches packed and sit and eat here. We try to show them VCDs in the PC we have [showed 'Ice Age' and 'Finding Nemo' !!]. By the way, we welcome any films/ documentaries [in VCD / Video cassette form] you feel the children should see!

Gardening

A couple of children brought small saplings of flowering plants and planted in front of Thulir buildings. This effort caught on with the other children too and soon we had many saplings being planted. Luckily for us it has rained in the past week and so most of the

saplings have taken root. Its amazing how much these children know about plants and the confidence with which they discuss this subject and the joy with which they work on the land. The challenge for us is to nurture this and to enable them to have a choice of working on the land with dignity when they grow up.

Books by children

This month, we also introduced the idea of making small booklets written and illustrated by the children themselves. There was one round of hectic and intense activity, and a couple of very good booklets were made. We hope to scan and put them on the web, so that we can share it with you.

Trainee Nurses' classes

The Tribal Health Initiative has taken on a batch of 6 girls to train them as health workers. This programme will be one and a half year long one. We have been requested by THI to take a few classes every week for them. On three days we take classes for them.. teaching English, Current affairs, and social awareness. We also have a once a week class on spoken English for the senior staff of the THI hospital.

Parents meeting

After the Parents meeting in July that we reported last in the July Update, parents have been visiting Thulir, to have one to one discussions with us and to borrow books. We could not have a meeting this month but scheduled one for September 14th.

As always, we would love to hear your comments and suggestions.

With best wishes,

Anu and Krishna