

Thulir

Newsletter – March 05

Greetings from Sittilingi.

The temperatures are soaring now a days and the heat wave beginning. It started about 2 weeks back and then there was a brief burst of showers a week ago that cooled the temperatures a bit but it is again heating up. There has also been an unusual pattern of low night temperatures [around 16 to 18 degrees] and a day time high of around 34 c. May be a sign of climate change?

Exam times!!

With the soaring temperatures it is also the “exam fever” season! Mohan is preparing for exams in 10 class -2 subjects this year. Senthil who was preparing to rewrite his class 10 English paper for the third time, had an accidental fall from a tree and has fractured his right [writing] hand. So he will not be writing this time.



Trainees join us

This month we decided that it was time for us to have additional staff at Thulir. Of course, we have been keen to take up local Adivasi persons and train them. We had postponed doing this till now as we felt this would be an additional responsibility, which may hinder our effort and time, spent with the children. Now we feel the right time has come as the Thulir children are slowly settling down and we also have an idea of their requirements; and secondly our logistical/ admin work has increased and is taking a lot of our time. The trainees, we hope would share some of this work and we can concentrate on teaching. Baby from Sittilingi, Selvaraj from Sittilingi and Anbu from Naikutti were chosen after an interview and test, as the trainees.

The training will concentrate on getting them to understand our approach to education; learn how various teaching/ learning materials are used; learn to handle basic admin work like purchases, accounts, bank and post office work etc. we also hope they will be a link with the community to get us parents' feedbacks and follow up on children who have problems coming to Thulir and help us identify resource people within the community.. We have regular class sessions as well as tasks to be done for the trainees. They have shown enthusiasm and willingness to learn so far and we are optimistic about the outcome of the programme. Senthil and Mohan have become valuable resource persons in showing them



various things they have learnt [like using learning materials and reading English!!].

Visit to Sittilingi and Malaithangi villages.

In continuation of the village visits by the Staff of THI, this month, Sittilingi and Malaithangi villages were visited. We too joined them as we thought this would give us an opportunity to meet villagers whose children are already visiting and using Thulir .We visited all the individual houses and fields in the day time and had a meeting with the whole village in the nights. In Malaithangi village, the issue of schooling for the children was brought up. The present school is very badly run with teachers even asking children to go fetch arrack!! In Sittilingi, the people felt that there is a need to press the Govt to convert the middle school into a High School. It was suggested and agreed by all that a fresh representation should be made to the Govt and follow up action taken to ensure this. Dr. Regi George of THI offered to help work on this. The issue of Hostel [which had once been running] was also brought up and people felt that it should be resumed.

Clay work

Clay work is the latest craze among Thulir Children. They like to spend many an afternoon, preparing clay, and shaping it to make shapes that they fancy. Some like to make animal figures, some pots, many of them made cell phones, one of them even made a computer! We tried firing in a small kiln that we made and the first firing came out all black as we had neglected to provide an opening for the flue gases!



We had better luck during the second firing and are now confident of better results. Overenthusiastic handling of the products has meant a lot of breakages, but nobody seems to mind as they look forward to making more!! Patti, an enthusiastic clay modeller, spent many afternoons working with the Thulir Children and was instrumental in getting this activity off the ground.

For the first time, we invited children from another village –S.Dadampatti who were interested in claywork to be part of the clay workshop held one Saturday. Seeing those children made us realise the positive changes in the Thulir children in terms of self-discipline, organisation, duration of concentration, discipline in handling materials without destruction, minimal fighting with each other, reduction in usage of bad language etc. The Thulir kids had come a long way in all this, though academically they have miles to go. We built a small kiln with the older children . Experimentation with firing and kilns goes on.

Shankar's visits

We were happy to have Shankar from Asha Princeton visit us. As you may know, Asha Princeton is supporting us with fellowships. We could communicate many aspects of our work to him. His positive attitude and support encourages us a lot. He was also able to communicate to us about the Princeton chapter, so now we have an idea about the group. It was also nice to meet Sriranjani, another Asha Princeton volunteer, at the Learning Network Conference in Jaipur this February.



English reading cards and Math dominoes

These materials that Dr Carolyn and Patti brought for us [we mentioned about in the last newsletter], have become very popular among children and also are proving to be effective tools for motivating children to learn more English.

Jaipur meeting

The Learning Network Conference in Jaipur was an opportunity for meeting interesting people working on Education and learning about different initiatives. Of particular interest to us was the presentation by Vigyan Ashram, Pabal. It has set us off into thinking more concretely on what we should be doing here for children of Sittilingi area. Preliminary discussions are on, and we shall share more details as our thoughts take better shape.

Anuradha and Krishna.