

Thulir

Newsletter – September 05

Greetings from Sittilingi.

The mood in Thulir is cheerful now as it has rained well the past week [about 12 cms in all]. The rain-gauge which was in the THI hospital has been shifted to Thulir and so there is much excitement every morning, and a rush to get the readings. The plants have perked up, there is greenery everywhere and we got a chance to plant the saplings that were growing too big for keeping in the nursery. A small plot of maize has also been planted by one of our students and the progress is being closely watched.



Hike in the nearby hill:

Last Saturday, the children and us went for a walk in the hill. The destination was an exposed rock formation in the forest that has interesting depressions on the surface looking very much like human and animal foot/ hoof marks [anywhere else it would have become a legend's [Rama being the favourite] footprints and a temple would have promptly come up!! Being Sittilingi and still innocent, it is a nice clearing in the forested hillside, ideal for a picnic.

One could only marvel at the ease with which the children could identify plants in the forests and know their uses and which fruits/ berries were edible. Since we were unfamiliar with the plants, there was a role reversal and all the children became eager teachers and had only 2 of us as students!!

Classes for the dropouts/trainees:

The daytime classes for our trainees as well as dropouts have had a mix of academic skills as well some basic vocational skills. Apart from English conversation and Tamil writing, the science classes have been related to some practical skills they are picking up. For instance some plumbing work and electrical wiring work has come up in Thulir campus and this is providing an opportunity for some hands on training. The theory classes have dealt with concepts such as units of measurements [linear, areas and volumes], pressure of fluids, and basics of electricity [production, AC/ DC, transmission, wiring basics etc].



A casual chat on computers lead to exploring binary [which students are fascinated with, and is proving helpful in clarifying normal base 10 operations!]

New children:

We have children coming from yet another village "moola Sittilingi" the village is about 2 kms away from Thulir. Some of the older children have stopped coming as they have dropped out of school after completing class 8 [mainly girls].

Workshop on Mud:

Selvaraj and Anbu our trainees attended a one-day workshop near Coimbatore which explored use of mud in art work for children. An interesting technique of using mud and leaves as paint material and drawing/ painting with fingers on paper was demonstrated. They came back and promptly had a session with our children in Thulir and there were some interesting results.

Trainee's training:

This activity is continuing with a lot of the regular work like maintaining accounts, stock books, library stock and maintenance, going to Salem and purchasing materials required etc. being done with increasing confidence and regularity by our trainees.

Kitchen/ bath/ toilet/store for Thulir

This was a long pending requirement at Thulir and finally we have these ready. Our students and trainees have pitched in with helping build some parts of it. Right now the kitchen is getting ready and they are building a mud smokeless chulha. Once this is ready, we will be able to make some nutrition supplement for the children coming in the evening.

Parents meetings

The last three months, we have had regular meetings with young parents. These are continuing to explore issues related to learning by children, and the difficulties being experienced by parents. Being a community in transition a lot of conflicts are being observed in relation to educating children—the need for discipline [beating the children], tantrums thrown by children and the ways to tackle them, etc. The past 2 meetings have been mainly discussing the effects of the presence of TV at home. Parents can see



effects of the presence of TV at home. Parents can see that it is having a negative effect on the children's studying at home. At the same time regulating viewing times and programmes seem difficult given the joint family situations. There is even tantrum being thrown by a child to put the TV on. There is also the notion that TV can be educative by bringing outside world to us [but a quick round of questioning showed the amazing fact that most people turn of the TV when the news starts!]. The discussion was inconclusive and will continue in the next meeting too.

As always we will be very happy to hear from you

Anuradha and Krishna

