

Viswa Bharati Vidyodaya Trust

Project on

Building Social Capital through Education

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2012 – MARCH 2013

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1. Introduction

It has been twelve years since VBVT launched its programmes to reach out to large mass of adivasi children in Gudalur Block who were not attending school and ensure that they received education. The VBVT's Education team felt that having done a decade of work the time had come to get an external person to make a thorough assessment of the work and suggest ways forward. VBVT therefore undertook to have an Impact Assessment of its decade-long work by an external person. While we have certain criteria to assess our work, it was felt that it would be essential for an outsider also to look at the achievements and shortfalls. This would give us an objective view of the work. We could then introspect and decide what the road map ought to be from there. In January of 2013 the Impact Assessment (IA) study was undertaken and the final report was submitted in early April 2013.

The IA Report noted the tremendous impact that had been made by VBVT through its work in terms of getting children into school. The number of children in school had gone by over 400%, and the number of children finishing school had also gone up ten fold - from 14 in year 2000 to 148 in year 2012. The Report also noted that only around 25% of those who entered school were actually finishing it. While the fault for this lay in the quality of education meted out in the government schools to which the children attended, the fact that AMS and VBVT were not able to get the schools to change for the better was also noted. At the same time the fact that the SSA which also noted that almost the entire drop-outs were from the adivasi community and that the government schools, especially the Tribal schools were not able to keep the children in school, have come forward to collaborate with VBVT to change the educational scenario among the adivasis.

UNICEF in 2012 had asked the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bangalore to do a study on the status of adivasi education in India and the report called "The Education Question" from the perspective of adivasis – concludes among other things that "*The education administration apparatus that oversees the delivery of education programmes has been developed and deployed in a mode of assimilation and domination which only reproduces a range of inequalities and disadvantages that most adivasi face.*" In this context, that UNICEF selected VBVT as a model in India which has achieved what has not been achieved anywhere else in the country was commendable. An organisation called New Concepts in Delhi was asked to do a study on VBVT and the final report is complete.

VBVT had responded over the years to the quality of education by supplementing the various support-programmes like libraries in villages, camps, study centres, tutorials and residential centres in collaboration with the SSA. In order to improve the quality of these programmes the Vidyodaya Resource centre was set up to train teachers from the community capable of teaching up to the primary sections. VBVT also supports children who want to go in for higher education so that they have access to opportunities. These students are also a motivating factor for others to move ahead.

The IA Report made a point that VBVT had, while responding to the various needs of the children from schooling to vocational training, it had probably taken on much more than it could do and so the need to focus on educational aspects of school-going children for some more time. These suggestions have been taken on board and VBVT education team has decided to get involved with Early Childhood Education on the one hand, and to work with adolescents both in school and out of school as important areas of intervention in the coming years. In this way, by taking on children at both ends of the spectrum, we hope to stem drop outs.

2 Direct Intervention with Children

2.1 Study Centres

The Study Centres programme has during this project period been co-terminus with the Teacher training programme. The Study centres were to be initiated by the teachers whom VBVT had trained in the last batch. They completed their training in the month of October 2011. Of the 15 trainees who completed training two doing higher studies thanks to the training course. They still consider themselves as part of the team and attend meetings whenever possible. Three of them are teaching in GTR schools and one more in a Panchayat school. There are 3 teachers in the SSA Residential Centre at Kozhikandy and 5 in the Vidyodaya centre. Both these Residential centres we consider as Study centres. Now there is only one person running a Study centre in the villages on a part time basis. This batch is referred to as Area-based teachers. VBVT's Study centres have been able to reach out to 181 children in the last year.

It has been a great achievement both for VBVT and for AMS that 12 of the trainees are employed full time and working very well. They are in contact with teachers, students and the community in a very active way. There is a demand for more such persons from the schools but we do not have any more trained people. All the Area Based teachers have been central to organising and conducting summer camps that took place in all the areas.

Each of the trainees has been attached to a teacher from the Vidyodaya School who acts as a mentor and whenever they have problems they can contact them and sort out issues. This has been a very useful move as it has helped these trainees to confide in and sort out problems without having to wait for meetings.

Each of them face a different set of challenges. However, everywhere, the role they play in the classroom and villages extends far beyond conventional roles of a teacher. Making village visits and speaking to parents, mobilising them to send and encourage their children to remain in school, convincing them of the value of education, walking from village to village to escort children to school every morning, managing and rectifying various infrastructural difficulties (lack of space, water and electricity shortage, building repairs) that exists in the schools and residential centers, bringing up issues that affect tribal children while they are in school with the non tribal authorities, dealing with children

emotionally affected by alcoholic parents and broken families, have all become part of their day to day work.

That there has been change is evident in more ways than one. Children at the Kadichankoli village are able to come to school regularly because Sekar escorts them safely, in elephant prone areas, to the school every morning. Prasad confirms that the reading abilities of the 30 children at his study center have improved since he started his class. Parents are more forthcoming in enrolling their children in schools (as is indicative from the new enrollment figures). The headmaster in the GTR school in Ponnani is more sensitive to issues faced by tribal children because Babu has raised them at meetings. Officials at the SSA were particularly impressed by children's participation in cultural activities conducted by Bindu, Parvati and Meena, something they want to introduce in other centers too. However making sure these teachers remain rooted and committed will be crucial in the time to come.

Given below is an update on each of the Area-based teachers on their work and challenges:

Bindu, Meena, Sarvanan, Vishnu and Parvati at the SSA Bridge Course Residential Center, Thottamoola-

The SSA center for drop outs run within the Vidyodaya Campus was started on July 21st 2012 and Bindu, Meena and Parvati have been part of it from the very beginning. They have been joined by Vishnu and Sarvanan from the Erumad Area. This decision was taken as the centre had a number of older children especially boys and it became difficult for the three of the lady teachers to manage without support. The five of them run a center for 53 drop out children. They play the role of teacher and warden and stay with the children on campus.

The five teachers they teach Maths, Tamil, Science, Social studies and English to children from class 1-7. Initially they had assigned specific classes to each teacher. However, they found that teaching all subjects for a class everyday was monotonous and tiring for both the teachers and students. And so they have decided now to take specific subjects across classes. They have observed that with this change, children's attention span has increased.

The responsibility of running the centre is now entirely given to the Teachers. This involves decision on classes, grouping of children, organising programmes for them, and dealing with the parents.

Dealing with parents has become an area that is requiring special attention. Parents who come from the village usually want to take the children back with them on some ground or the other. Convincing them to leave the children behind has become a major time-consuming task. We also realise to what extent the adults in the community are the cause for the children dropping out. This is an area that needs to be addressed.

They conducted a baseline study in July when the center started, in December they are going to conduct tests for the children to measure progress. They say, the initial months were difficult. Dealing with children who have been used to complete freedom, keeping their attention etc was challenging. Today, one has to note to their credit that the children have settled down and are performing academically

Apart from this they are also responsible to take children to the hospital whenever required (for both physical and mental health issues), the cleanliness of their campus and the everyday running of their center. They are managing well so far.

Chandran, Manikandan and Vijaya at SSA Bridge Course Residential Center Kozhykandy

The SSA center for drop out children in Kozhikandy run by VBVT was started in June 2012. Manikandan along with Vijaya and Chandran have been working in this centre since then. During the course of the year, Vijaya was given the task of interacting with the community and ensuring that children came to the centre. Manikandan and Chandran have been taking classes.

As mentioned earlier, it has been challenging to keep children at the residential center since many of them are not accustomed to routines. Most of the children are from the Kattunaicken community and lived inside the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and so they find the Centre a major restriction to the freedom they feel in the forest and their homes. Due to this many children have been indefinitely on leave, and this has been one of the major hurdles in the smooth running of the center. To tackle this issue, Manikandan and Vijaya, along with members from the Area team and some times Area leaders too have been making personal visits on a daily basis to the children's villages. During their visits they speak to parents and members of the village and explain to them the value of education, so that they are also able to convince their children to stay at the center. They have realized that support from parents and the village, are crucial in keeping children in school. They also personally escort the children back to the center each time they go back.

Manikandan and Vijaya are also engaged in working with the Area Team to conduct surveys of drop outs, school going children. They also assist with other activities when they visit the villages.

Chandran continues to play the role of a full-time teacher at the SSA center. He takes Tamil, Maths and English classes for children upto class 5. They have conducted a baseline study and hold regular tests to assess the children's performance. Chandran has been in touch with his mentor at Vidyodaya School who regularly helps him with his doubts.

In addition to these three, there are two teachers Sheela and Shubha, both from the Paniya community. They have both completed their D.Ed. They have also been getting regular inputs from Vidyodaya teachers and have improved their quality of teaching tremendously.

Babu, Shekar, Nisha and Saroja as Volunteer teachers at GTR Schools

Babu continues to work at the GTR school in Ponnani as a voluntary teacher. He has been able to respond to the needs and difficulties of the children who attend the school and this has helped to improve retention in the school. For instance, he found that the tribal children in school came to class without a slate, pencil etc. He knew that their family did not have the money to buy these things and so he spoke to the headmaster in his school and asked if the school would buy these things for the children. After a few meetings and discussions the headmaster agreed. Now the tribal children in the school have a slate, pencil etc every time they need it. In the past Babu has brought up other crucial issues like making sure tribal children don't always sit in the back benches during classes etc.

There is a difference in the way children behave with non tribal teachers and him. He says they are much more disciplined around the non tribal teachers, but attributes most of this difference to the fear the children have for the other teachers. He says he is happy that children are not wrecked by fear into behaving a certain way with him.

Several village visits are undertaken every month and he speaks to parents about sending their children to school regularly. He has also spoken to his area team about organizing a parents meeting which will be held soon.

Shekar is a volunteer teacher at the Panchayat Primary school in Kadichankolly. He has been teaching there for a year now. He teaches all subjects for standard one and two and takes maths, science and social studies till class 5. He says, the non tribe teachers know that if he leaves they will lose many of the children in their school. So they treat him well. There are two other teachers but they are irregular and reach school very late and leave early. He continues to pick up children in the morning and bring them to school from their villages. He says the academic levels of the children have improved. Using the ABL method tests are taken everyday- (although they fear the word Test, and would not come to school) to make sure children are able to understand and absorb things.

He also works at the Area level. He conducts library classes, helps with getting ration cards and insurance cards.

Saroja now works as a volunteer teacher at the Ayyankolly GTR school. She takes Tamil and maths for 1st and 2nd standard and social studies for 3rd and 4th standards. Initially she had some difficulty following the timetable, but now she has eased into it. Initially she was shy and had trouble getting along with fellow teachers, but now things have improved. The kids, she says, interact with her freely and so learning is better than with other teachers. People in her village and home are happy that she is working at the school as a full time teacher. She consults other Area-based teachers and her mentor when she has doubts or needs help.

Nisha has been a volunteer teacher at the Mukkaty GTR school in Choladi village from July 21st onwards. She teaches Maths and Tamil for class one and two and science for class 4. She says that although the school has organised a jeep to pick the children up, they are irregular to school. Very often children don't turn up in school after the weekend. Her school has 150 children (80 non tribal and 70 tribal) with 6 teachers. She is the only tribal teacher. She finds that teachers in her school also take a lot of leave. Class 6 and 7 does not have an English teacher, and nothing has been done about it so far. Her family is happy that she is working as a full time teacher in a school. They also feel safe because she is picked up and dropped by a jeep each day as her village is rather interior and elephant infested.

Prasad runs a very successful centre in Kootat. When he began, Prasad only taught Tamil and Maths at his center. However, now he is comfortable to teach basic English, science and social studies too. Although 41 children are enrolled at the center 30 come on a regular basis. When the children's academic levels were compared with a baseline that was conducted when the center began, Prasad found that almost 80% of the children who were unable to recognize alphabets, had drastically improved now. Initially Vishnu and Saravanan also used to pitch in on a weekly basis and help to take classes. Now that they have moved to Gudalur, he is able to handle the centre alone which is very telling.

In addition to the academics, Prasad has also had to deal with several other problems. For example the alcoholic father of one of the students regularly came and disrupted the class. After being unable to solve the problem on his own he decided to speak to people at the Area center. A senior animator, KC Krishnan went to village to speak to the father, but the man did not come out to meet him. For all these reasons Prasad was unable to include the child in his class. However a few weeks later, the boy turned up at the center on his own accord and he Prasad, moved by the child's interest, took him into his class.

The center has faced several infrastructural problems over the months. It did not have a door, had bad lighting and seepage through the walls. With help from the Area all these problems have been addressed.

Shanti and Parvati pursuing further studies

Shanti is studying in class 12 at Kumaran tuitions in Gudalur while Parvati is doing a Bachelor's degree in Ooty. Both of them are in close touch with the rest of the team and their Area Teams and attend meetings whenever it is possible.

2.2 Village Libraries

The number of Village libraries has now increased from 56 to 66 in the last 10 months. All the villages village libraries run by 116 village librarians reaching out to 946 children across the 8 areas.

Name of Area	No of village libraries	No of Guides	No of children
Erumad	12	22	158
Ayyankolli	6	11	102
Ponnani	11	21	146
Pattavayal	6	10	51
Devala	7	10	126
Devarshola	7	12	89
Gudalur	11	19	155
Srimadurai	5	9	109
TOTAL	66	114	941

The Library coordinator has been following up on the following during visits:

- In new library centers, meetings were held with parents and children to explain to them why the library is being established.
- Stock registers with names of books that the children are reading were checked and updated
- Keeping and checking an inventory of Materials found in the libraries
- The progress of children's reading abilities in comparison to their baseline was assessed
- New materials were given to libraries if required

- Old books that have been read were exchanged with new ones
- The library guides were informed about training held at the resource center
- Guides were encouraged to use the training that was given to them during the training sessions
- Problems and issues in every library were heard and addressed

New Centers

From June to March, 10 new libraries have been started. Visits were made to establish contact with children and parents in villages where libraries did not exist previously. During the meeting the running of these libraries was explained along with some rules. Children were asked to read story cards and a baseline study was conducted. The children were classified into 4 categories- pre readers, emerging readers, developing readers and experienced readers. The details of the baseline study are given below:-

Sl No	Name of Village Library	Area	Baseline				Not done	Total
			Pre Reader	Emerging Reader	Developing Reader	Experienced Reader		
1.	Kozhikolly	Devala	32	9	5	4		50
2.	Kotravayal	Gudalur	6	1	4	2		13
3.	Elumuram	Gudalur	1	6	4	2		13
4.	Champakapalli	Pattavayal	10	3	1	2		16
5.	Pannikal	Ayyankolli	4	3	3	2	2	14
6.	Kundilkadava	Ponnani	8	5	2	2	1	18
7.	Kottrikal	Ponnani	1	2	2	0		5
8.	Muttilmoola	Erumad	1	1	1	0		3
9.	Elivayal	Devarshola	3	1	2	0		6
		TOTAL	57	46	26	16	3	148

2.3 Mobile Library

In the last 10 months mobile library sessions were conducted in two areas. In Ponnani, 30 children participated in sessions held in 6 villages - Kadalakolli, Thondiyalam, Ellamanna, Kotrikkal, Ponnani and Chakarakullam. Similarly, in Erumad 36 children participated in sessions held in 5 villages- Muppukunnu, Kulal, Vellachal, Ulluwadu and Mangara

Baseline taken in Erumad and Ponnani

Area	Pre Reader	Emerging Reader	Developing Reader	Experienced Reader	Not Done	Total
Ponnani	15	9	1	0	5	30

Erumad	14	13	4	5	0	36
TOTAL	29	22	5	5	5	66

The reading levels of the children at the end of the six month period has to be done in Ponnani as the six month period over in November.

A number of activities were conducted during the library session. The children participated in a a story telling exercise. They read aloud stories from books and story cards. They were given story cards and told to share the story with others as a comprehension exercise. The children did puzzles of the Tamil Nadu map where they learn the capital and various districts. They also put together an India map puzzle. The children participated in a drama exercise where they enacted stories they had read. They did drawing exercises. They played various memory and educational games. The children went for a walk. They played outdoor games.

The sessions are meant to inspire children to start village libraries in their own villages. For instance Kotrikal, from where children attended a mobile library session, now has a village library. The session built up a sense of solidarity among children from different villages, who would not have had the opportunity to meet otherwise. They learnt to speak in front of people, many confidence building exercises were conducted. The sessions increased their sense of motivation to go to school.

2.4 Camps

Camps have been conducted this year with renewed vigour mainly because the Area teams felt that these camps have helped to motivate children and parents. Efforts have been made to draw in children who have not attended camps. Parents and youth from some of the villages attended the camps and took back the messages. The opportunity to interact with children from other tribes, listen to their language, learn their songs and dances, understand the role of the AMS have all contributed to the children to interact with the Area Team whenever they want to. Nearly a third of the villages in the project area have been covered through these camps. This relationship has been crucial in the motivation for children to continue studying.

Area	No of villages covered	Total No of Students attended
Ayyankolli	15	106
Devala	11	68
Devarshola	11	56
Erumad	12	31
Gudalur	14	96
Pattavayal	9	40
Ponnani	22	29
Srimadurai	8	46

TOTAL

102

472

3 Community Engagement with Children

3.1 Coverage

Area	A'kolli	Devala	Devarshola	Erumad	Gudalur	Pattavayal	Ponnani	Srimadurai	Total
Total Villages	64	21	39	69	30	34	27	38	321
No. Covered	36	21	39	64	30	34	27	38	289

Coverage has increased from 285 to 289 villages with the Erumad area steadily expanding their area of coverage. Three new Paniya villages have become Sangam members.

New Enrollment

Area	A'kolli	Devala	Devershola	Erumad	Gudalur	Pattavayal	Ponnani	Srimadurai	Total
Girls	6	17	20	16	42	27	19	14	161
Boys	5	18	25	22	37	29	21	28	185
Total	11	35	45	38	79	56	40	42	346

There has been a concerted effort by the Area Teams to enroll eligible children in schools and to ensure that those who have dropped out go back to school wherever possible and the impact of this can be seen.

There is an increase in the number of children enrolled from last year from 307 to 346 as awareness to put children in school among parents in the villages has also increased. Parents take great effort to get their children enrolled into schools. For example, schools require a birth certificate to enroll a child. Parents make visits to the Panchayat Office, with the support of the area team, and get the certificate issued. All parents buy their children bags, new clothes and footwear and umbrellas when they join school.

School Going Children

Area	A'kolli	Devala	Devershola	Erumad	Gudalur	Pattavayal	Ponnani	Srimadurai	Total
Girls	159	120	222	256	353	158	139	213	1620
Boys	138	138	191	209	208	151	131	194	1360
Total	297	258	413	465	561	309	270	407	2980

The number of school going children has increased in the current year as against the last

year from 2737 to 2980. One reason for this is that many children who were initially drop outs were put on our drop out list which was given to the Govt. During inspections the officials found that many of the children whom we had listed as drop outs were still marked in the GTR schools or PUS's registers. And so, an effort was made by us, along with supports from the govt, to make sure these children attended schools regularly. Most of these students are in school now.

Drop Outs

Area	A'kolli	Devala	Devershola	Erumad	Gudalur	Pattavayal	Ponnani	Srimadurai	Total	Enrolled in SSA centres
Girls	14	23	9	24	14	8	8	19	119	
Boys	16	17	10	36	18	9	18	27	151	
Total	30	40	19	60	32	17	26	46	270	135

The last year there were 244 drop outs but we were unable to get them back into the system. Out of the 270 drop outs, we have enrolled 106 into two SSA Bridge Course Residential Centers run by VBVT. Another 29 children have been enrolled into SSA centers run by the two other NGO's. We hope that these children will remain in school regularly after they attend the 2 year long bridge course. Those who have been left out are mostly children who are above 11 years and they find it hard to come back to the school routine.

Retention at higher classes

Retention at higher classes has been a matter of concern as more and more children find the last hurdle of the Class Xth exam a major issue. Encouragement though counseling and also tutorial support is being made available so that they do not drop out at this stage. All of them are now being carefully followed up at the Area level. We are now trying to ensure that these people continue till they finish schooling at least, that is, class 12.

Here are the details of the various higher education programs that students across the 8 areas are pursuing currently.

Area	X	XI	XII	UG	PG	TTC	B Ed	Dip	Engineer	TOTAL
Gudalur	34	9	3	2	-	1	-	-	-	49
Erumad	14	14	8	7	1	1	-	-	1	46
Ayyankolly	26	5	4	13	-	1	-	-	-	40
Ponnani	4	4	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	12
Pattavayal	13	1	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	18
Devershola	8	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Devala	14	4	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	22
Srimadurai	6	5	4	2	1	1	-	-	-	19
TOTAL	121	43	46	18	4	4	-	-	1	219

3.2 SSA Residential Centres

3.2.1 SSA Centre at Kozhikandy, Srimadurai

Children

In March of this year children from this Centre were mainstreamed. They were admitted to the local school as of April 1st. They have been attending school since then. In the last academic year there were 49 students in the Centre. Of these 11 students were in the age-group 13 years. Initially they were residing in our centre and attending school from there as the school is more than 4 kilometers away and they find it hard to walk. However, the SSA authorities disallowed this and so they were not retained. This led to all of them dropping out during the course of the year.

Children mainstreamed:

Class	Girls	Boys	Total
1			
2	1		1
3		3	3
4	6	2	8
5	4	3	7
6		1	1
7	2	2	4
8	6	7	13
Total	19	18	37

We also felt that if these children had stayed a year more they would have been able to come up to the Class 8 level. However, as they could not be retained as per the rules, they were admitted to the local High school. Arrangements were made for them to stay in the centre, against the rules of the SSA, as all of them come from within the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve. However, although given a lot of support from our side, all of them have dropped out at the end of 6 months. This is indeed a very sad affair. A lot of effort has been wasted.

This academic year the Centre took in 15 more children, all from the Srimadurai area. The following Table gives their class-wise break up based on the last class studied. Additionally the centre has taken on another 18 children already and will be taking on another 30 children by the beginning of June.

Table 1 – Class-wise

Class	Girls	Boys	Total
1	1	1	2

9		2							2	4
10	1	2	4						2	9
11		2	3	2					3	10
12			3	2	4	2			3	14
13				3	4	3			3	13
Total	4	6	10	7	8	5	0	0	13	53

MARCH 2013

Age	Class 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Absent	Total
7		2								2
8		1								1
9			1						3	4
10		1	2	2					4	9
11			1	3	2				5	11
12				3	4	2	1		3	13
13						3	4	3	3	13
Total		4	4	8	6	5	5	3	18	53

Staff

Both the teachers, who have completed D.Ed., have joined up for a distance education course to do their graduation. They have been getting regular inputs from the Vidyodaya school.

The non teaching staff of the centre were found and appointed by the Adivasi leaders. There has been a change only in the assistant cook and the watchman both of whom were replaced with other adivasis. The warden was from the Kattunaicken community went on maternity leave for the last three months . She was temporarily replaced by a youth from the Kattunaicken community.

Academic developments

With the admission of 15 new children, a new group had to be formed to accommodate them. Their levels are terribly low. For these children in particular the main concentration is

on Tamil and Maths.

It was decided that initially the children would concentrate on just Tamil and Maths but through activities. The rest of the group has moved on to learning English as an additional subject.

A number of indoor games and activities were planned to get them interested and to concentrate on work. Story-telling, songs, drama, drawing and such methods were used to keep them occupied. After the first month when they appeared to be settling down, more serious work was introduced to those who were willing. Science experiments were introduced to all the children so that they understand the theory and work with their hands.

Craft

Craft was introduced to the children as all of them are very good with their hands. The children make small items using lantana, bead chains (traditional craft), macrame pot hangers and wire bags which have been highly appreciated by the parents.

Health

Regular health check up is done by the Health Animators of Srimadurai area and in addition a total health check is done. In the month of July and August Health check was done. Each child has a Health Card and this is monitored. All the children have improved their weight and height.

Savings

The children's savings in the Centre which totaled Rs. 972/- in November 2011, has increased to Rs. 2682/- in May, reached Rs. 3660/- in November and touched 4000/- in March .

Parents meeting

Four Parents meetings have been held in the last 10 months. A majority of the parents were from the Kattunayakan tribe from Chembakolli village. During these meeting the parents, staff as well as the children were involved in discussions. Decisions were based on consensus. Parents decided to take responsibility to bring children back to the center if they went back home for the weekend or holidays.

The second and third parents' meeting were also well attended. The meeting began by talking to parents about bringing the children to the center as the attendance in the centre had improved very much. This issue was discussed in the previous meeting and the parents had offered to take responsibility for it. There has been a marked improvement in the attendance since. It was decided that a monthly parents meeting would be held on the first Sunday of every month. As decided in the previous meeting, action has been taken to ensure water was provided and this has been appreciated. Students brought up some important issues too. The parents advised that they play together and share the games materials that were available rather than fight.

Inspection

There have been Inspections almost every month by the SSA staff including the CEO and the Joint Director of the SSA. They have appreciated the work and the kind of attention that has been given to the children. They particularly appreciated the fact that cultural aspects are encouraged in the Centres. The SSA has been very supportive and given text books and note books for the children in the centres.

3.2.2 SSA Centre at Vidyodaya, Thottamoola

The Center for drop outs was started in July 2012. Children from Devala, Erumad, Devarshola and Gudalur areas have been admitted into the center. Currently there are 53 children staying at the center (33 girls and 20 boys) all of whom belong to the Paniya tribe.

Table 1 – Class-wise

Class	Girls	Boys	Total
2	1		1
3	3	3	6
4	4	6	10
5	9	7	16
6	8	9	17
7	0	3	3
Total	25	28	53

Academic level Class-wise as per school record in July 2012 – MATHS & TAMIL

Age	Class 2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
7	1	1					2
8		3					3
9		1					1
10			7				7
11		1	3	8			12
12				6	6		12
13				2	11	3	16
Total	1	6	10	16	17	3	53

Base-line July 2012

Age	Class 1	2	3	4	5	6
7	2					
8	3					
9	1					
10	5	2				
11	7	4			1	
12	7	3	1		1	
13	5	2	5		4	
Total	30	11	6		6	

Progress – November 2012

Age	Class 1	2	3	4	5	6	Absent	Total
7	1	1						
8	1	2						
9	1							
10	1	3	2				1	
11	2	6	2		1		1	
12		6	1	2	2		1	
13		2	2	3	3	3	3	
Total	6	20	7	5	6	3	6	47

Progress - MARCH 2013

Age	Class 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Absent	Total
7		1	1						2
8		1	2						3
9	1								1
10		3	2	1			1		7
11	2	1	2	5	2				12
12			3	4	4		1		12
13		2		2	5	1	2	4	16
Total	3	8	10	12	11	1	2	6	53

Teachers

At the moment, five Area-based teachers, who were trained in the last teacher training program conducted by VBVT are running the center. They play the role of the warden as well as teachers. They stay with the children at the center. The teachers are Bindu, Meena, Parvati, Vishnu and Saravanan. In the beginning they found it challenging to get the attention of the children. However with time they have developed a close relationship with each child.

Parents Meeting

Five parents meetings have been conducted in the last ten months. They were held in August, October and November, January and March. Almost all the parents attended the first two meetings. However the third meeting was attended by fewer parents. The last two meetings were very much better. Several issues were discussed. Children staying back for long periods of time when they went home was a main concern. It was decided that we need rules about when children can be taken back to their homes. Parents were requested to only come on Fridays evenings so they could bring the children back by Sunday evening. It was further decided that even this must only be done once a month.

Inspection

SSA officials have made inspection visits to the center every month. The inspectors have included the Block Supervisor, Block Coordinator, District Supervisor, SSA CEO and the

SSA Joint Director. The Joint Director especially, gave us a very good review. She mentioned her appreciation for the way we have incorporated adivasi cultural activities (like song and dance) into the children's daily routines.

Crafts and games

After lunch the children spend their time doing crafts and playing games. Over the last six months the children have done macramé, string art, bead chain making, tailoring, embroidery, cross stitch and drawing. In the games period they play with the rest of the school.

Cultural Activities

The children have been taught adivasi songs. Apart from this doing adivasi dancing is also part of the weekly routine.

Assembly

The children at the SSA join the Vidyodaya school during assembly. They participate in all activities with the rest of the school. These include news reading, singing songs, dancing, reciting poems and stories etc.

Evening Classes

It has been challenging to keep the children engaged through out the day. The evenings are crucial since this is when the children find themselves thinking about their homes and families. We have tried our best to engage them in useful and fun activities during this period. Over the last six months a variety of things have been organised. Paramasivan, a teacher from Vidyodaya took a Yoga class for one month, after which we had a doctor from the hospital take interactive classes on health and hygiene. Following this, the children spent their evenings at a dance class. Subsequently, they attended short English and Maths classes. Along with all this the children regularly attend movie screenings organised for them. Currently the children are learning music in the evenings to gear up for a performance during the annual Christmas celebrations at school.

Health

Ten children are sent to the hospital on a weekly basis to get a health check up. At the hospital a record of their height and weight is maintained. The children are also checked for scabies on a regular basis. The counselor in the hospital has also provided mental health support to children that have needed it.

Savings

The children together have been able to save Rs 1700 over the last ten months.

3.3 Village Education Workers

Area	No of VEW's	No of Villages Covered	No of children taken to school			No of Meetings Held
			G	B	T	
Aynkoly	3	4	24	18	42	0
Devala	3	3	54	50	104	3
Devarshola	7	8	72	42	114	3

Erumad	3	3	23	24	47	3
Gudalur	2	2	13	14	27	3
Pattavayal	2	2	13	12	25	3
Ponnani	2	3	27	25	52	3
Srimadurai	9	10	75	45	120	3
Total	31	35	301	230	531	21

In many villages, village workers have been discontinued. This is because children are going to school on their own. Apart from escorting children to school and back the Village workers participate in Area Education committee meetings and also interact with the teachers in the schools. They then report the issues brought up in the discussions to the area team. They continue to play this role.

3.4 Area Education Committees

Area	Aynkoly	Devala	Devrshol	Erumad	Gudalur	Pattavayal	Ponnani	Srimadurai	Total
No of meetings	1	4	2	1	3	1	2	1	15
No. of participants	4	12	4	6	4	4	11	8	53

The area education committees have been constituted to address problems children face when they go to school, issue of quality in schools and to make sure children regularly attend school. Most of the Areas have selected 5 members from the villages to be part of this committee. In Erumad the Area Team has decided not to set up a separate committee for this rather that the education issues is to be discussed as part of the Area Sangam Leaders meeting held each month. The other Areas have decided to meet once in three months.

The Area Education committees met once in June/July at the Areas. In most of the Areas they wanted to know how they could be more effective. So Taluk level workshops have been planned for them and the first one was conducted where they were acquainted with all the details of the programmes of VBVT and it was well attended by 52 members. The next in the series will have to do with the RTE Act and how they can make it effective in the schools.

During the meetings various issues have been discussed. A recommendation that committee members should attend meetings held in schools in their areas has been brought up. The committee must act as the link between the schools and areas and communicate issues and decided the ways in which the area teams can provide assistance in addressing various issues. For this, they need to understand the work that is being done by VBVT and the Govt. The area education committee must make themselves aware of the various financial schemes, scholarship support and other benefits that can be availed by students. Apart from this, to avail of any govt scheme, community certificates are necessary. And so the area education committee must facilitate procuring them for

children.

Besides this, it was discussed that in the Gudalur and Pandalur taluks put together there was only one high school for tribal children. More schools were required urgently. Various ways of bringing this to the governments notice were assessed. A decision is pending.

3.5 Area Education Coordinators

All the Education Coordinators have been visiting the schools and keeping track of students who are irregular or dropping out. The Srimadurai Area has been assisted by Vijaykumar and the Pattavayal Area by Kannan.

The Area Teams have also been working towards a village level plan in each of the Areas. This is to focus on the village and their particular problems. Often it is just a few villages that have a problems or sometimes a few families within a village which have problems. The attempt now is to zero in on the families and their specific problems and see how we can get around it. Often dropouts or irregular attendance of children or malnutrition are problems of single mothers or people who have to migrate to get work or in families where there is rampant alcoholism. So a more holistic approach rather than a sectoral approach is called for in order to tackle the issues on a long term basis.

This plan is almost completed in all the Areas and the information is now being compiled. In the next three months we hope to go through a major planning exercise in order to come with more realistic plans. These exercises have also involved the Sangam leaders and so the commitment towards the programmes we expect will be better than they have been so far.

4 Vidyodaya Resource Centre

4.1 Teacher-Training Course Batch II (2012-14)

In August 2012, the second teacher training course began with 18 young boys and girls at the Vidyodaya Resource Center. The area teams along with inputs from various villages, recommended a set of students for the training course and the training team finalised the list. Out of these one of the girls left at the end of one month due to problems on the home front. Of these there are only 14 continuing the training. The ones who left had personal or health problems that did not allow them to continue to live in Gudalur.

Details of the Students

Area-wise break-up

Area	Nos
Devarshola	1
Erumad	7
Devala	2
Pattavayal	3
Ponnani	1
Total	14

Tribe-wise break-up

Tribe	Girls	Boys	Total
Paniya	6	5	11
Bettakurumba	2	-	2
Kattunayakan	1	-	1
TOTAL	9	5	14

Educational status

Tribe	Class 9	Class 10	Class 12	Total
Paniya	1	9	1	11
Bettakurumba		2		2
Kattunaicken			1	1
Total	1	11	2	14

No students from the Mullukurumba tribe were taken because it was decided that there is already a generation of educated people in the community and other tribes were lagging behind. Last time there were no Kattunayakan students. We had made sure there were two this time, but one of them has left due to personal problems.

Unlike last time, we restricted the training to those that had at least studied up till class 10. Only one person with a lower class was taken as she had been attending the Village Library training programme and the Training team was familiar with her background. The reason for taking candidates with higher educational background was because, at GTR schools or Panchayat union schools the minimum qualifications for teachers is a D.Ed after finishing class 12. When the Pattavayal Panchayat Union School asked us for volunteer teachers trained we were unable to find people who had passed their class 12 exam. And so, we decided to come close to the minimum qualifications by taking in students who had at least studied until class 10. They would then be helped to complete their schooling and go in for higher studies. Apart from this, from our experience of running the course for the previous batch we have found that it would have been easier for us complete our targets with students who had higher academic levels. The lower the educational level the longer the training programme has to be conducted.

The new trainees were encouraged to speak to students of the old batch (now referred to as village teachers) who are now working as volunteer teachers at GTR and PU Schools or are working at SSA residential Bridge Course Centers for drop outs etc. This was done so they had a better idea about what the course was going to be like.

A baseline study was conducted at the beginning of the session. The students were tested in all subjects. They mentioned that they found English and Maths particularly challenging. There has subsequently been a shuffle of teachers for various subjects compared to the last batch of training, keeping their academic levels in mind.

Base line

Subjects/ Marks	<35	36 - 50	51 - 100
Tamil	2	7	7
English	7	6	3
Maths	16	1	
Science	14	3	
Social Studies	1	5	11

Progress as of March 2013

There has been substantial progress in their performance. Subjects like English and Science had been started late as the emphasis has been on Tamil and Maths to begin with.

Subjects/ Marks	<35	36 - 50	51 - 75	76 - 100	Total
Tamil	-	3	9	2	14
English	3	5	5	-	13
Maths	-	3	4	7	14
Science	5	5	4	-	14
Social Studies	-	7	5	2	14

Like the previous batch the girls students stay within the Vidyodaya campus while the boys are staying in a rented building. However, this year, 54 additional children are staying on campus since an SSA Bridge course center for drop outs was started. This is making the living space a little cramped for everyone.

Attendance

Aug - 12	Sept - 12	Oct - 12	Nov - 12	Dec - 2012	Jan - 13	Feb - 13	March - 13
98.00%	96.00%	99.00%	97.00%	88.00%	90.00%	90.00%	89.00%

The attendance has dropped in the last four months mainly because two of the trainees had severe health problems and were admitted in the hospital. Otherwise there has been no attendance issues.

Foundation Course

This was a new element introduced this time. Most of the topics covered in this Foundation course were there in the previous course but it was brought in during the course of the rest of the course. We now felt that in order to make the candidates more serious, to build their commitment and to keep their feet on the ground and not feel that as they were going to

become teachers they consider themselves a cut above the rest of the community.

In the first month the students attended a one month long ' Foundation Course'. The course included an introduction to indigenous people across the world, similarities in culture, ways of thinking and violence perpetrated against them. Tribes of India and Tamil Nadu were also introduced. We were fortunate to have two interns from Australia, who gave the students a brief idea about Australian aboriginals- their history, culture and present day circumstances. Apart from this the course covered the history of the AMS starting from the historic land rights demonstration in the mid 80's that took place in Gudalur, to the building of various institutions here like the hospital and school. As part of this, the students spent time with senior animators and others from their community (often even their own relatives) listening to stories of struggle and dedication of the early days. As part from this exercise the students went on village visits and spoke to elders in their community to learn about traditional knowledge, practices and their history.

When asked to describe adivasis at the beginning of the course the students used words like 'poor' and 'illiterate', however by the end of the course the students admitted to being surprised by how much their grandparents knew about many things.

It was interesting to note that after a short course on their community and history, their perspectives changed drastically. Initially their reasons for joining the course were limited to their aspiration of wanting to become a teacher. When asked why they wanted to be a teacher they were unable to articulate themselves. However, after the course, their reasons were rooted much more in a sense of community and belonging. Their role as a teacher within their community expanded the scope of their work. One students mentioned,

'When I came here I wanted to learn about teaching, but it seems that I am learning more about myself than anything else. Doing a Teacher training course anywhere else would not have given me this opportunity'.

Theater Workshop

The students attended a short workshop conducted by a theater person from England. He spoke about the value of using theater as a means to facilitate learning. Together, the students put up a play on the 14th of November, during the Children's Day program. It depicted a little boy being freed from child labour and being admitted into a center for drop outs by the trainees.

Academic Work

Our experience of running the course earlier made us realize that the trainees needed a stronger academic base to cope with teaching the syllabus of higher classes. Their training in languages and maths needed to be more rigorous. For this reason we have increased the total number of hours the students spent on learning Maths and Tamil in the course.

The students have started attending academic classes since October. Here are the details of the number of hours that will be spent of each subject across the two years:-

SI No	Subject	Year I	Year II	Total
1.	Tamil	130	120	250
2.	English	120	150	270
3.	Mathematics	200	150	350

4.	Science	100	100	200
5.	Social Science	100	80	180
6.	Art and Craft	150	0	150
7.	Health Education	60	0	60
8.	Library	75	75	150
9.	Teaching- Learning Methods	75	50	125
10.	Teaching Practice	130	150	280
11.	Child Psychology	0	200	200
12.	Adivasis of the world- history and their knowledge	100	0	100
13.	Adivasi Munnetra Sangam	200	75	275
14.	Philosophy of Education	0	100	100
15.	Challenges in Education	70	70	140
16.	Institutional management	0	100	100
17.	Class Relationships	20	20	40
18.	First Evaluation	30	50	80
19.	Exposure Visit	0	70	70
	TOTAL	1560	1560	3120

Attendance

Aug-12	Sept-12	Oct – 12	Nov – 12
98%	96%	98%	96%

4.2 Area Coordinators Training

The Area Coordinators have been undergoing training in planning and monitoring of not only the education work but also of the other sectors. This has become important as they, while being in charge of the educational programmes of the whole Area they are specifically in charge of a certain number of villages. It has become difficult for any one person to visit and monitor all the villages and so each Area Team member takes on a certain number of villages that he or she can monitor and look into all aspects of development. This also gives them a better and more holistic picture of the changes that are needed in the villages.

4.3 Village librarians' training

Except in the month of August library guide training sessions were held.

Area	Name of library	No of guides attended
Erumad	Devana	6
	Tirumangalam	6

	Kappukunnu	6
	Manalvayal	6
	Kudirampuram	6
	Kootat	6
	Kappala	6
	Chomara	6
	Cherachal	6
	Muttilmoola	2
Ponnani	Kadalakolli	3
	Mangamvayal	6
	Chakarakulam	6
	Kundilkadava	3
	Kotrikal	3
	Neliyalam	6
Devershola	Kadichankolly	6
	Puthur	6
	Elivayal	2
Gudalur	Milikunnu	6
	Chalivayal	4
	Elamuram	3
	Kotravayal	1
Devala	Kozhikolly	6
Ayyankolly	Kottapadi	0
	Manalkolly	0
	Pannikkal	0
Pattavayal	Annapanchool a	3
	Chembagapali	3
Srimadurai	Vadavayal	1
	Vattikolly	1
	TOTAL	125

Record Work- The guides were taught how to maintain a reading list register in their libraries.

Stock Note- The guides were taught how to keep an up to date inventory of all the things- games, puzzles and learning materials in their libraries.

Computer Class- The guides were made to play games on the computer to familiarize themselves with it. They were split into groups at the start of the session and by the end

they were all able to play the games. They especially enjoyed this session since training in computers was not available anywhere else. The games played were 'typing master', 'Tux Maths' and some memory games.

English Class- Conversational English classes were held where children were taught to ask and answer simple questions. For example- what is your name? What is this? How many brothers do you have? How old are you?

Created Alphabet and Word Charts- The children made pictorial charts, as teaching learning material of words starting with all the alphabets in Tamil. They coloured these pictures and stuck the chart papers and discussed how they could use this in their villages. They took these charts to their village libraries.

Drama- The trainees were taught how to put up a play. They were split into 4 groups and made to perform a play each.

Adivasi Language Charts- The guides were given charts of the Paniya and Bettakurumba language to be used in their libraries.

4.4 Life Skills Training

Students of X, XI and XII in the areas attended life skills training sessions. 97 Students from the 8 areas participated in it. Three sessions were held and all of them took place in Gudalur. The sessions started with everyone introducing themselves. The students were divided into smaller discussion groups and made to discuss what was important to them in their life, what they needed in their life the most. Each group made a list and from the list prioritized most and least important. Then they discussed how they could achieve them. They discussed the things that they needed to do, step by step, to achieve their goals. If it was not possible to achieve something the ways of dealing with that were also discussed. The discussion steered towards the importance of culture in our lives.

The sessions ended with the participants were told that if they wanted the class again they could inform people at the area so that dates can be fixed. Everyone showed great interest in this.

5. Dissemination of Culture Specific Curriculum

5.1 Developing a Cultural curriculum

Food Gathering Booklet

This booklet is now ready and before printing colour photo copies are being made. The book has attractive drawings on the subject by the children of Vidyodaya school. It contains details of adivasi food practices among all the four tribes. It contains sections on Hunting, food gathering and cultivation practices. The book includes activities for children and suggestions for teachers. It uses this content to also teach concepts in Mathematics, Social Studies and Languages.

Participation in the Akhra Tribal Festival in

Ranchi on the 8th, 9th and 10th of November. A group of 36 adivasis participated in a cultural festival organised by the Central University of Jharkhand in Ranchi. We had the opportunity to interact with tribal people from across the country. The three day long

festival showcased tribal culture- song, dance, food etc. Our groups performed their traditional songs and dances .

The festival was also attended by the group of children working on the filming and photography project. At the festival the children had the opportunity to exhibit photographs they had taken.

The children also filmed the festival and are in the process of making a short movie to be screened for everyone in Gudalur.

5.2 Interactive Culture centre

Honey Gathering Exhibition

On the 24th, 25th and 26th of June, 2012 we hosted an interactive exhibition on Honey gathering practices among tribals in the Gudalur valley. This exhibition marked the beginning of an Interactive adivasi cultural center. The center has been conceived as a bustling space for the revival of a strong adivasi voice.

In our first exhibition we displayed material on the traditional practice of Honey Gathering of the Kattunayakans. Over many generations they have mastered the skills required to tap honey. Honey gathering is of social, cultural, economic and spiritual importance to the community. The exhibition included a display of photographs, a short movie and a live display of combs and bees, explaining the science behind the process. Apart from this children were also exposed to songs and dances associated with the practice, its medicinal uses as well as food recipes that traditionally use honey or parts of the hives in them.

Several activities were conducted after the exhibition. The children were asked to list all the sounds they hear in the forest. Apart from this we conducted a quiz about honey gathering practices for the children.

Finally the children had the opportunity to interact with elders from their community who have been involved in this practice.

The material produced by the exhibition has been converted into lesson plans on Kattunayakans and their honey gathering practices for the students of the Vidyodaya school.

Visit to Tejgadh

Initially three members from our team made a preliminary trip to Tejgadh in Gujarat where Bhasha runs an Adivasi Academy along with a museum and cultural center run by Adivasis in Gujarat. Following this a group of 40 persons, team members and sangam leaders visited the academy. The academy is conceived along similar lines as our initial plan and so various ways of collaborating and sharing were discussed. Everyone at Bhaasha seems very keen on collaborating to get our cultural center going. To begin this process a sharing/exchange exercise has been suggested where a few people from the adivasi community in Gudalur visit Tejgadh to see their center and interact with members from the adivasi community that put the center together.

6. Vidyodaya Adivasi School

Vidyodaya Adivasi school, which began as a school for non-tribal children, started to take in Adivasi children since 1996 has enrolled 373 adivasi children so far. Currently 86 children are studying in the school. Since it started, over 75 children have gone on to

pursue higher studies. Some are working after finishing the eighth or tenth. Some are married (especially girls). About 10 children after completing 10th or the 12th have joined some of our institutions like the Umbrella and Soap unit, Carpentry unit, Teaching at SSA centers, Cultural center. This has been a measure of our success. Our alumna continue to visit our school regularly.

This year our first batch of class 10 students will appear for their exam. Apart from the students in Vidyodaya, in June 2012 we took in 54 drop out children in our campus in a residential bridge course center run under the SSA program. The students of Vidyodaya and the SSA Center come together to participate in all activities of the school. This has been our attempt to bring in more students so our resources at Vidyodaya can reach a larger population.

Students

Class- Wise Strength - Learning Centers

Classes	LC I		LC II		LC III		LC IV		LC V		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	1	8	2	4	1	5	3	4	2	5	9	26

Groups – Primary classes

Group	Boys	Girls	Total
Group 1	6	3	9
Group 2	5	8	13
Group 3	4	3	7
Group 4	3	3	6
Group 5	1	4	5
Group 6	4	3	7
Group 7	2	2	4
Total	25	26	51

Classes	Boys	Girls	Total
Learning Centers	9	26	35
Primary class groups	25	26	51
Grand total	34	52	86

In the beginning of the year there were 100 children. However 86 children are currently

studying in the school. 14 children took Transfer certificates from the school in the month of June to join other schools. The main reason for this, was the notice given by the NIOS – OBE that they were discontinuing the scheme and that we could not enroll children under this scheme for the year 2012-13. However it was definitely reassuring to know that parents of 84 children wanted their children to continue studying here and were ready to support us in our efforts to get the necessary affiliation. In addition to that 5 new children enrolled this year after receiving information that the NIOS – OBE scheme was being continued for another two years. Vidyodaya has since applied to the Dept of Elementary Education for affiliation to the state board in compliance with the RtE Act. The papers are under process.

Attendance (in percentages)

Group	October	November	December	January	February	March
Group 1	92	87	87	79	84	88
Group 2	81	88	83	80	88	80
Group 3	71	85	84	81	91	90
Group 4	90	88	82	76	76	91
Group 5	70	84	83	79	76	88
Group 6	67	74	90	87	86	89
Group 7	86	83	98	94	92	86
LC 1	99	99	100	96	96	95
LC2	98	99	99	97	95	93
LC3	80	99	99	88	89	93
LC4	73	91	93	86	89	88
LC5	72	92	79	86	88	87
TOTAL	81%	89%	89%	85%	87%	89%

Average attendance percentage for the 6 month period is 86%.

Examinations

Students have appeared for the NIOS Exam in A, B and C Levels, corresponding to the 3rd, 5th and 8th std levels. In addition the X Std have appeared for the SSLC Exams.

This year **22** students are giving the **NIOS exam**. All of them have passed and what is surprising and heartening is that all the 22 students attended the exams without absentees. This is the first time this is happening. **9** students are giving the class **10 exam**.

Class	Boys	Girls	TOTAL	Exams
X	1	8	9	SSLC
VIII	1	5	6	C level of NIOS

Group 1	6	3	9	B level of NIOS
Group 3	4	3	7	A level of NIOS

All the exam going children have been advised to stay in the school as hostelers as they were unable to put in the kind of time in their homes.

Trips

Group 3 and 4 went on an educational trip to the vocational unit to see the wood work and carpentry happening there. The activities of Just Change are also part of the Social Studies Syllabus and so they were taken to the soap and umbrella making unit there. They prepared and asked many questions about the work. They wrote about their experiences in their language classes. They also drew all the raw materials that went into making an umbrella. The children discussed how for the first time they realized that there was a process from which an umbrella is made.

At the carpentry unit the children also watched bee boxes (apiary) being made. They noticed how scaled were being used to measure wood before it is cut. When they returned to their classroom they recalled the professional application of using measuring instruments.

Learning center 2 children went on a trip to Ranchi to the Central University of Jharkhand to attend and document an international Tribal Festival. The Adivasi Munnetra Sangam was invited to participate in a cultural festival and it was decided that the children who have been through the short training course on filming and photography could document the entire event. .

The children had the opportunity to interview many indigenous people from across the country and abroad. The children, along with elders from their communities participated in performances of their traditional adivasi dances. The event gave them the opportunity to bond with elders in their community as they were together representing their tribes. For most children this was the first and definitely the longest train journey they had been on, they visited the engine, the pantry car and spoke to the driver on the train. The children also learnt some basic conversational Hindi to communicate with people in Jharkhand. During the long train journey to central India the children marked out each station on a map. They saw rivers, big cities, small towns and it served as an excellent way to learn geography.

They took several photographs and videos while they were away and made a presentation to share their experiences with the rest of the school and the adivasi community after they return. It was a wonderful learning experience.

Projects

The children of class 9 have been learning to take photographs and videos using a camera. They took many interviews with children, teachers and others in the school, and they used this footage to make a short Film about the school. Apart from this the children have taken wonderful photographs of flowers and insects in their villages. These were displayed at the photography exhibition held at the Central University of Jharkhand at the tribal festival, which the children attended. Not just this, the photographs will also feature in the Adivasi Munnetra Sangam Calendar, which is being printed for the year 2013.

This is seen as the training ground for the children to document their Culture from their perspective hoping that they would be able to see for themselves and show to the others what their life is like.

The children of class 7th tried to understand the basics constructing a building. They learned about the various raw materials that are used as well as the various measurements required for any construction. They saw first hand how a building is built and had a question and answer session about it.

The children of class 6 learned to Bind books and the different ways of Binding books. They also worked in the Library and studied how books are cataloged in the library.

Teachers

The 12 teachers who have been in the school have continued. Six of these are adivasis. This year we have a volunteer teacher from the UK teaching English at the school. She takes English classes for class 9, 8 and 7. A remarkable achievement of the school has been the fact that 8 of the teachers have continued in the school for over 5 years now and no one has left in the last three years. According to them, what has kept them working at the school has been

Teachers and learning

Initially, we used text books to teach subjects. We found that while some students were able to absorb things quickly others were lagging behind. Our teachers discussed this at a meeting and decided to implement a vertical grouping system for Tamil and English similar to the ABL method used all over Tamilnadu. After a few months, we did a review of this new method.

The teachers felt

- that more learning materials were needed for it to work better as, specific children required specific materials suited to their learning difficulties.
- That there were insufficient group activities as children tended to work individually all the time,
- Scope for Drama, story telling by children, group discussions was almost lost in this attempt to get children to work on their own and complete the tasks as quickly as possible

The teachers decided to change the system that is practiced as ABL in our State. Towards this they have

- Introduced all the group activities that had been neglected
- More reading cards, picture cards for picture description, word cards and other games where children could frame sentences clearly or give specific words to improve their Vocabulary, public speaking exercises, etc., were made additionally to suit specific needs of the children.
- Timings were discussed and decided by each group for – a) group activities and b) for individual work of their own.

The teachers realized from their Review that children were getting too individualistic and too competitive. They felt that all the sharing and helping each other that ought to have taken place was not happening. Hence an opportunity for the teachers to reflect and learn took place especially with regard

- to the values that the children were picking up
- especially the understanding of how it went against the very basis of learning among the adivasis

- that this was also perhaps the situation of the adivasi children studying in other schools

Training Class

On the 4th of August the teachers of the school attended a training program. It was about the different indigenous people of the world. It was important for the teachers to understand that people in other indigenous communities especially those from Australia still used their mother tongue to communicate and teach their young. They learnt that

- it is important to continue using our adivasi languages.
- It is necessary to build relationships with our older generations and history.
- There were many similarities with many of the activities conducted in school and how the aboriginals of Australia taught their children
- that aboriginals of Australia were able to pass on to their young their traditional knowledge better than we have been able to do here
- that we should find ways of passing on our traditional knowledge even though life styles and environment has changed completely

Curriculum

Efforts continue to be made to introduce adivasi culture into the curriculum. In Maths the teachers have selected some topics for each level and how they could be made into effective learning materials. The materials are yet to be prepared.

Yashodhara who spent a week in the school as a Consultant helped formulate many topics about adivasi culture which could be introduced at all levels in the school. The teachers have been working together in groups to discuss how we can introduce them in our classes. We are working on our first module on Adivasi Food. A first draft has been prepared and it is now being circulated for Review. We expect to start using the module in January when the third term of the school starts. Other modules would be taken up as and when the teachers gather information and prepare the required materials about them.

Library

Group	Pre-reader	Emerging reader	Developing reader	Experienced reader	TOTAL
LC 1	-	-	-	9	9
LC 2	-	-	-	6	6
LC 3	-	-	1	5	6
LC 4	-	-	5	3	8
LC 5	-	2	3	2	7
Group 1	-	1	6	2	9
Group 2	-	6	6	1	13
Group 3	-	1	4	2	7
Group 4	-	4	-	1	5
Group 5	5	-	-	-	5

The children were asked what they liked about their library class. They were also asked how they could make it more interesting

Their responses

“ We like

- reading story books
- doing puzzles
- hearing stories being read out by the teacher.

We would like to also

- paint the stories we read and hear in the library class.
- do a lot more coloring (6 year olds)
- listen to stories from a cassette or a CD”

Savings (in Rupees)

Month	Deposit	Withdrawal	Balance
June	1969.00	515.00	1454.00
July	1381.00	0	1381.00
August	2317.50	0	2317.50
September	2054.50	10.00	2344.50
October	1563.00	500.00	1063.00
November	1185.50	0	1185.50
Total	10470.50	1025.00	9445.50

The children have used their savings for their own needs like purchasing pens, pencils, notebooks and paying for their examination fees.

The importance of savings is discussed with the children during Assembly time. The children share their desire to buy a cycle, or go on a trip or use money for educational purposes. And so they decided saving was important. Not just this, the children have withdrawn money not just for themselves but also for their parents. Apart from this when Crafts done by the children, are sold, the money is deposited into their savings.

Parents Meeting

In the last 6 months one meeting of the Parents has been held. In the meeting 53 parents participated.

The main issues that were discussed in this meeting were

- the absentees in 10th standard and the NIOS. Exam going batches
- that children in future could not be enrolled for the NIOS exam as it was being discontinued by NIOS after the academic year of 2012- 2013.

The parents asked what we were planning to do after this. The parents gave their opinion. Some of the opinions that came up were

- Our school could get government recognition.
- Any help and support expected from parents would be forthcoming from them in the matter of government affiliation.
- Teachers suggested that according to RTE, children under 14 years could seek admission in other schools without difficulty and parents were asked to consider this
- parents however were not keen to withdraw their children and requested the school to make one last all out effort to get recognised by the government.
- The school authorities accepted the above suggestion

Apart from meeting with parents many parents have been encouraged to come individually

and visit their children with regard

- to their child's academic progress,
- to the health or ill-health of their children and seek help from the teachers
- to meet teachers with regard to any personal problems too
- to see for themselves how children participate in different activities in class especially when craft is going on

7. Vocational Placement

This is an area that has been changing rather fast in the last few years. Initially young people thought that they had to pick up a skill and get out of the routine agricultural labour that they were involved with. Then the wages shot up two and three fold compelling them to switch back to that as a means of earning a substantial sum. Now the fascination for that is slowly wearing off and young people, especially the more educated want to also learn additional skills. In this context, it was decided to see how we can provide job opportunities for the educated. This necessarily means that we need to create the opportunities for them. There are a number of them who are dropping out of school at various levels and going for wage labour which is paying very well these days. But we also find that there are some who do not want to get into that trap. This is mainly because a number of those who do go in for wage labour end up becoming alcoholic.

Taking into consideration all these aspects the idea is to create a number of small enterprises which can accommodate all those who complete education. It is in this context that setting of a Unit was considered.

The Unit that is presently running successfully is the Carpentry Unit. This produces mainly teaching materials but has also progressed to small furniture and other wooden items like bee-hive boxes and so on. There were 4 youths training and working in it full time in September but in the last month 5 more have joined. This Unit will expand in course of time and take on more trainees. It may also branch off and have one or more similar units in other Areas.

The Soap-making and umbrella making units which were running on an ad hoc basis have moved in with the Carpentry Unit and regular training and production has been started as of November. There are 5 to 10 women training here regularly. The Unit which had moved to Manvayal in Srimadurai Area into a rented building, has taken on a separate shed also to accommodate the umbrella unit.

It is envisaged that in the near future this Unit will be independent of VBVT and VBVT will use the funds it has to place orders for the materials it requires. It will maintain a separate account and will remain self-sufficient. Soon, it would have to be registered separately as a business if necessary. This is the model we hope to develop.

Next year it is planned to start a training of basic skills that are locally required like electrical, plumbing, masonry, wiring, accounts estimates, painting such like which these youth can provide locally to the people. They will also be equipped to work in groups providing basic services. These as done in Vigyan Ashram, Pabal, will be very on the job so that there is a seriousness about it.

7.1 Student Counseling

The children in class 10, 11 and 12 have been attending counseling session during the course of the year. Three sessions were held.

Details of children who attended the sessions

Sl no	Area	X		XI		XII		Total
		B	G	B	G	B	G	
1.	Pattavayal	2	5	2	-	3	-	12
2.	Ayyankolly	4	6	2	2	3	2	19
3.	Ponnani	1	2	4	-	-	2	9
4.	Srimadurai	1	3	1	2	2	-	9
5.	Erumad	2	8	2	3	2	3	20
6.	Devarshola	7	4	2	2	4	-	19
7.	Gudalur	2	5	4	2	2	2	17
8.	Devala	2	3	1	5	-	5	16
	TOTAL	21	36	18	16	16	14	121

The area teams, on the recommendation of the area education committee decided to organize the counseling sessions this time. During their meetings several issues that were faced by the students came up and they agreed that the students would be able to address these in counseling sessions.

During the session the boys and girls sat together in smaller discussion groups. In them, they discussed all the things that hinder their work or come in the way of the things they want to achieve in life. These included lack of space in the house, the noise of the blaring television in the background, lack of electricity, fear of teachers, teachers comparing one student with another, too many children in a class with just one teacher, inability to pay fees for voluntary teachers appointed by the PTA, and many other issues. The children then categorized these problems as being due to domestic conditions, school related and government inefficiencies.

After having discussions within their groups the children made presentations in front of everyone. Finally the groups sat together and discussed the ways in which they could solve at least some of their issues themselves. Suggestions for the area team to get involved to help solve some of their concerns was also suggested.

During the day the students also participated in a quiz and learnt and talked about Adivasi culture and the work that the AMS is doing. This part of the day was attended by some of the senior animators from the area.

7.2 Local and Institutional Training

No of youth using vocational services from June to March 2013

Sl No	Vocational Programs	TOTAL
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1.	Local Training	79
2.	Institutional Training	2

No of youth from areas attending Local and Institutional training

AREA/ Training	Erumad	A'kolli	P'vayal	Ponnani	D'shola	Devala	G'lur	S'maduria	TOTAL
Umbrella & Soap Making	5	3	-	6	1	2	2	6	25
Carpentry	1	-	3	2	-	-	1	4	11
Tailoring	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
ITI	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Accounting	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Computer Training	2	2	2			1	1	1	9
Teacher Training	6	-	3	1	1	2	1	-	14
Nursing	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Cultural revival work	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Lantana furniture							2	10	12
TOTAL	21	5	8	9	2	5	8	23	81

8 Higher Education Support

As the aspirations of students increase so does the cost of meeting these aspirations. Many students who have passed their class 10 exams are unable to study further because of financial constraints along with the increasing cost of higher education. In circumstances like these, upon the recommendation of the area team, scholarships are given to students to study further. Even when students are in 10th std they use this money to pay for additional tuition classes for subjects that they find difficult.

8.1 Tutorial Fees

Area	No of students	Amount Given (Rs)
Ayyankolly	1	2000
Devala	1	25000
Devershola	3	2600
Erumad	10	10000
Gudalur	2	2000
Pattavayal	2	2000
Ponnani	5	5000
Srimadurai	5	6011
TOTAL	29	54611

8.2 Revolving Fund

Since June 13 students have been given Rs 12,208 from the revolving fund. Repayment during the period has been Rs 1400. To make sure the revolving fund keeps growing people are being encouraged to make repayments whenever possible.

8.3 Children's Savings

Area	No of students enrolled	Amount Saved (Rs)	Withdrawals (Rs)	Balance (Rs)
Ayyankolly	86	50229	9829	40401
Devala	73	28732	8534	20198
Devarshola	62	35329	4843	30486
Erumad	104	64660	19609	45051
Gudalur	42	13324	5000	8324
Pattavayal	89	18333	860	17473
Ponnani	62	16874	5450	11424
Srimadurai	29	5774	0	5774
Vidyodaya	86	108778	24834	83943
TOTAL	633	3,42,033	78960	2,63,074

The coordinator has taken enormous pains to sort out the Savings of the children by looking into all the accounts to see how many are active. Those that were not active were weeded out and new students were added on. So although there is a drop in the number of students from 697 last year to 633 this year these are active and can be seen from the fact that the overall savings has risen.

As mentioned previously, the problem is to collect the money from children who live in very dispersed villages. This again requires the cooperation of the entire Area Team to help with the collection. There has been very positive response to this as can be seen. Children's savings has improved. The money that is withdrawn is used to buy books, bags, chappals, uniforms. Sometimes the school fees is also paid with this money.

9. Conclusion

The shift in the approach to an integrated way of working at the Area level has begun to show results. The coordinated actions and the sharing of work among the Area teams has led to a not only a sense of satisfaction among them but it has helped in reaching many villages that would otherwise not have been touched.

The utilisation of the full potential of the last batch of trainees has had a great effect of the

overall morale of the team. One can see the effect of the training. The second batch is also shaping well and we hope to put some of them on the field straight away and encourage some to go on for higher studies.

In the course of these 12 years one can see the kind of qualitative change that has occurred in the minds of the people towards education and their future. This needs to be sustained. The quality of education at the schools may change in course of time but by then many will fall on the wayside. In order to ensure that the momentum is maintained these programmes have to be continued.

It is in this regard that efforts are now directed to convince the government to come forward to support these programmes financially. Proposals have been put forward too. Some of the senior staff from the adivasi community have also taken up the task of following up on these matters. Given this approach, VBVT strongly feels that instead of demanding that the govt's schools and teachers change to suit the needs of the adivasi people, it may be better to leverage funds from the govt to start schools by VBVT for the Adivasi children as in the case of Vidyodaya Adivasi School.

A collaborative approach is also being initiated with the ICDS in order to ensure that adivasi children attend these centres and receive education. We believe that this may help in solving the drop-out issue to some extent.