

**VISWA BHARATI VIDYODAYA TRUST
(VBVT)**

Annual Report

2013-14

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Background

The Viswa Bharati Vidyodaya Trust is a charitable body registered (no. 41 of 1993) under the Indian Trusts Act. Its registered office is 12/669B, Thotamoola, Gudalur – 643 212, The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu. It has nine members on the board of Trustees, which includes the Managing trustee.

Viswa Bharati Vidyodaya Trust (VBVT) was started in 1993 order to address widespread educational deprivation amongst adivasis in the Gudalur valley. It has focused its energies on the development of innovative, alternative and supplementary educational systems for children who are frequently first-generation learners.

In 1996, on a request from the adivasi community, VBVT took adivasi children into Vidyodaya school. Soon VBVT became a school ran by adivasis, for adivasis. The Trust also took on adivasi educated youth to train as Teachers. Today they form the Education Team, which handles the entire education programme.

In the year 2000, with the support of SRTT, VBVT launched a major programme of ensuring enrollment in schools. From 737 children in year 2000, by 2012 it had covered 289 villages ensuring education to 2980 children. A key thrust of VBVT's work has been to ensure 100% enrolment in all these villages. In order to provide motivational and academic back-up to these children who were going to school, an Outreach programme of Camps, Mobile and Village library, Science experiments, and village level institutions such as Study centres, non-formal centres and such other programmes were initiated.

VBVT has been able to create a consciousness about education in the minds of the adivasi population; now, what may be called education-seeking behaviour is the norm rather than the exception. At the same time, there remains a need for good quality schools and teachers sensitive to the cultural hurdles that adivasis face. It is in this context that a long-term collaborative effort with government agencies sensitive to these aspects is envisaged by VBVT.

Early childhood education

Overview of the Project,

Preparatory phase for ECE

VBVT identified Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust, a Chennai-based institution, as a suitable expert organisation to support VBVT in the area of Early Childhood Education. In 2013, an agreement was made with Bala Mandir to partner us and act as a resource organisation for the next five years in the area of early childhood development. Bala Mandir visited Gudalur in September 2013 and worked with us to identify 15 ICDS centres on which to focus our efforts during this initial phase. In December Bala Mandir conducted a 3 day training workshop in Chennai on Early Childhood Development for our adivasi project staff.

The project team, led by these local level specialists from adivasi communities, has diagnosed the status of ICDS provision in 15 target villages, and conducted indicative appraisals of community demand for the ECD supplied there. Informal discussions have also started with villagers in various locations, promoting an increase in awareness about ICDS services. Factors behind attendance and non-attendance of children at the 15 ICDS centres have been enlisted. Appraisal visits to all centres were undertaken in the first instance and since then a first round of initial action plans has been drawn up for 5 of the 15 centres, incorporating both the centres themselves and the communities that they serve (see annexures). The role of interfacing with ICDS staff has been done largely by adivasi specialists directly, with support from VBVT. ICDS officials and staff have responded positively to collaborative efforts and service improvement will be measurable in the longer term.

With plans for community-based action on ECD now in place for 5 villages, and working relationships in place with ICDS staff in 15 centres, work is ongoing to bring about a shift amongst families towards seeing ICDS as an indispensable component of early childhood development provision.

Problems Encountered

Problems - understood as barriers to universal and daily participation in the ICDS programme provided by the 15 target centres - are identifiable both at the supply and the demand side. Initial discussions with some parents during the first 3 months of the project revealed concerns amongst about the appropriateness of ECE at AWCs. Indeed, it was found children would not attend, despite being enrolled and there were also signs that some children had dropped out, raising the issue of community

demand for pre-school education. Teachers that were spoken to also reported finding it difficult to spend time within the communities they serve to encourage children's attendance at ICDS centres. Indeed, an important question that some community members asked concerns the rationale for sending children to pre-school. Misgivings were expressed about the value of sending children to an unfamiliar environment rather than being at home with their family.

It was observed that two ICDS centres (one government-run, one NGO-run) were closed at the time of visiting. In the case of the government-run centre, it had not yet opened: the school year was still in its first week, and most parents were not yet aware of this, or otherwise not yet habituated into sending their children. This suggests either an inadequate enrolment drive *before the start of the school year* or otherwise lack of community interest or capability to arrange for children to attend. The acceptance of ICDS staff that it would take time for the community to get round to sending the children implies a collective failure to come to a consensus on the urgency of ECD and the appropriateness (indeed, uniqueness) of the ICDS centre as a place (*the place!*) at which it can be accessed.

It was observed more than once that a disproportionate share of children actually present in ICDS centres were from non-tribal communities. It was also reported that attendance of tribal children in the 2-5 year old age group tends to be limited to 2-3 days per week (where it happens at all). Again, this suggests a lack of understanding amongst the community of the value of early childhood education. On a not unrelated point, one of the responsible NGOs was found to have closed down a centre early (around 11am) after distribution of nutritional supplements. This again suggests that the educational role of the centre is not recognised by either the NGO concerned or the wider community. Cases such as this raise the issue of the level of community accountability of a NGO and its suitability in delivering ICDS; but they also invoke (again) the questions raised earlier: (1) the extent of understanding of the role of early childhood education in a child's development and (2) the perception of an ICDS centre as a suitable place for ECE, and therefore, (3) the potential that exists within that location for quality ECE to actually be provided. Such questions need to be addressed at the supply side as well as the demand side.

At the community level, barriers to overcome include those connected to language, which could severely impede (at least initially) tribal children's learning and enjoyment of ICDS provision. Another concerns the working commitments of parents, many of whom are required to work at times that fall outside the ICDS centre day: such as, for example, from 8am to 5.30pm (the centres visited were open from approximately 9am to 3pm). This makes it very difficult for them to take their children, and arrangements do not seem to be generally in place for them to be taken by others in the village. Connected to this problem is the issue of distance between the home and the centre; in many cases, this exceeded 1km as the centre served one or two villages but residents of outlying villages, or outlying habitations within these villages, have no alternative service. The terrain in these areas: often hilly, often forested, can make journeys of more than 1km very difficult, and, during times of monsoon and in areas affected by the human-elephant conflict, even hazardous.

Approaches used to resolve problems

One key motivational factor that the project team has stressed is that children attending ICDS centres receive a free and nutritious lunchtime meal on a daily basis, including high-protein foods essential for healthy growth and development. They have also been informed about the way in which these centres can contribute to children's learning.

At this preparatory stage work is ongoing to build a roadmap for resolution of issues at the Balwadi level and at the community level that are preventing ICDS from reaching all the children for whom it is intended (see action plans, attached, and future plans).

Lessons learnt

The Exposure Visit that the project team underwent to Bala Mandir in Chennai enabled learning for the team in terms of early childhood education and development, Montessori education methods, how to observe children's learning, issues when developing a survey and examples of ways of collecting data. Other lessons learnt indicate some of the contextual challenges.

Community-level

1. *Some in the tribal communities are unconvinced by the value of ICDS services, especially education*
Lower levels of attendance amongst tribal children as compared to their peers from other social groups lead towards this conclusion. Routine use of at least one ICDS centre as (merely) a nutrition collection point suggests some scepticism about its capacity to serve additional functions.
2. *Access remains a major problem for many*
The distance between home and the centre is too great for many in the community
3. *Work commitments often clash with ICDS timings*
The start and end of the working day for many parents fall respectively before and after ICDS opening hours, making it difficult if not impossible to drop off and collect children from the centres.

ICDS-level

1. *Good nutritional provision is not universal*
Where centres are run by a private NGO, there is not always the guarantee that community members will access all the nutritional supplements to which they are entitled
2. *Not all centres offer appropriate, child-friendly spaces*
One of the observed centres was very small, raising questions about whether it is fit for purpose. It is difficult to see why parents would want to send their children to spend the day in such a cramped space, when they have a world of interest to explore on their doorsteps in the village.
3. *ICDS staff have shown support for working collaboratively with us*

Discussions with ICDS staff in their centres have been positive about the possibilities for collaboration, specifically in terms of community engagement

Further plans for expansion of the component

Plans to address ECE cannot be separated from overall plans to address not only education but also community health. Malnutrition remains a significant problem in the area, affecting children's birthweight and even, in the most severe cases, their subsequent cognitive development. This in turn may put them at greater risk of dropout, as they are more likely to struggle at school. Our plans therefore, consistent with our broader vision, are to consolidate and develop an integrated approach in which ECE is made the concern not just of dedicated project personnel within area teams, but of entire area teams including health animators and others, such as savings coordinators, who also make regular visits to villages.

Decades of working with tribal communities in the area have led to a deep respect for indigenous cultural practices, including those related to raising children. A key aspect of our work in the coming months will be to instigate debates within these communities on good child care practices and to guide discussions on how these can be complemented by children's attendance at ICDS centres.

One feature of our approach will be to take advantage of the enabling national and state environment. The 2013 Food Security Act, added to 2006 Supreme Court Orders, guarantees the right of children in India to ICDS services. This will enable us to work in a rights-based mode going forward. The context in Tamil Nadu is also one where ICDS has improved dramatically in the last 30 years following public engagement and protest; notwithstanding the specific challenges in the Nilgiri hills, this history gives us reason to hope that ICDS will be relatively proactive in supporting our work with the community as well in addressing any supply side shortfalls.

Strategies to be pursued will be discussed collectively by members of area teams and staff of VBVT, ASHWINI and ACCORD. An overall strategy, together with localised approaches, will emerge with the completion of the 15 initial action plans. Plans identified for discussion so far include:

1. Hold interactive learning sessions for all area teams on ICDS as a set of legal entitlements, and the significance of the 0-6 age period for a child's health, growth, development and future prospects
2. Household visits to understand parental issues, concerns and hopes
3. Village-based discussions on what good early childhood development looks like, and what factors support it, with appropriate reference to national and global norms of good practice
4. Interface meetings between parents and ICDS staff on good practice regarding child care for 0-6 year olds
5. Set up meeting with adolescent girls and their families to facilitate their awareness of ICDS services
6. Raising community awareness, through the above means, of ICDS as a series of rights to which children, pregnant women and adolescent girls are entitled

7. Recruiting village-based 'ayahs' or ECE volunteers to take children to and from anganwadi centres
8. Building a cadre of volunteers to provide language support for children as they enter and become accustomed to ECE at ICDS centres
9. Where ICDS is run by NGOs, working with these NGOs to ensure that services are provided as per national legal norms
10. Coming to a consensus - at the level of each village - on what is a suitable distance between home and the ICDS centre, enlisting households from which ICDS is inaccessible and discussing strategies to tackle the access problem (including, where necessary, advocating for a new ICDS centre to be constructed)

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan

Collaboration with SSA to initiate Model Study Centre

Data from the academic year 2013-14 shows the persistence of the issue of dropout, particularly in the post-primary stage (see Table 1, below). In addition to that annual survey, and as mentioned in the previous report, VBVT undertook a study into dropout to build our knowledge base on the subject and assist in the development of strategies to address it. The lessons learnt section elaborates further.

In our two residential centres for children who have dropped out of school, work has been ongoing to secure their successful progression back into formal education. Education in both centres is arranged according to aptitude and ability in the first instance, before taking account of the age of the children. Three teaching groups have been set up and children study Maths, Tamil, Science, Social Studies and English within these groups. Craft and sports activities are also arranged. The differentiation strategy that has been adopted means, for example, that the youngest child might be placed in the middle group if he or she is at a particularly advanced stage. Children have opportunities to take on responsibility and contribute to the life of the centre. For example, monitors are chosen to assist with serving tea. In both centres, cultural activities are also arranged, enabling the children to participate in activities such as adivasi dance and songs.

SSA have provided support in terms of books for TLRs, and also in terms of training adivasi teachers. SSA officials have also been coming and monitoring progress of teachers and of children. Meanwhile, Vidyodaya school continues to act as a model school for the community. Work is underway to set up non-residential centres for adivasi children, enabling them to access supplementary learning from remote villages. This work is leveraging video technology to create visually exciting and engaging learning materials.

The children often have to be removed from the study centre in order to attend certain festival days in their villages. At this time they are unable to come back to school for some time, leading to substantial loss of learning. Irregular attendance was an issue for 10 of our students and some children have returned home during the

course of the year and not come back to complete the bridge course. This has sometimes happened during festival times in their home villages.

We have discussed issues of children's attendance with parents. Tracking children after they have returned home has been arranged through on-site area teams composed entirely of adivasi community members. Dedicated education specialists from within these teams have made household visits to speak with and counsel parents, though on occasion, parents themselves have not been present within the household and nor have the children. This may be due to economic issues or even to migratory patterns and will need further investigation. Meetings were arranged with parents to garner their trust and enthusiasm for the work of the study centres. Teachers have also gone to meet parents personally.

A study during the early part of the year into why children dropped out from government schools in the taluk has been a rich source of learning for the VBVT team. The study was conducted at 3 levels: children, parents and schools. Reasons that emerged included fear of teachers, aversion to exams, girls' fear of walking to school alone, and difficulties in learning: in managing to understand tasks and teaching. 60% cited accessibility problems as a driver of exclusion. Some children who left school also drifted into work, but this appeared to be a product of being out of school rather than a reason for leaving in the first place. An issue for particular reflection concerns the view held by some within the community that school offers very little of value. A connected concern is that the home environment is not always made conducive to learning, with parents not able to support their children in their studies. Another factor that emerged, and one that is corroborated by our own experience, is that peer pressure dynamics are often especially powerful within adivasi communities. Thus, when a few children decide leave school, others are persuaded to follow.

Table 1. Tribal children in Gudalur and Pandalur Taluk: Numbers and % children who have dropped out

Class	Dropout		
	Enrolled June 2013	Not enrolled May 2014	% dropped out
1st Std	226	14	5.80%
2nd Std	269	25	8.50%
3rd Std	291	25	7.90%
4th Std	286	40	12.30%
5th Std	333	57	14.60%
6th Std	315	73	18.80%
7th Std	271	84	23.70%
8th Std	238	100	29.60%
9th Std	167	66	28.30%
10th Std	118	46	28%
Total	2514	530	17.40%

Future plans include arrangements to share learning between the 2 study centres. This process will address common issues and concerns, share best practices, and discuss ways of working more closely with area teams. It will involve face-to-face meetings between staff and a joint study into emergent best practices. It is

anticipated that the distinct approaches taken by the two centres will provide a balanced platform from which to consider the way forward for 2013/14. Strategies to be discussed include more opportunities for staff (especially adivasi staff from the Gudalur centre) to visit children’s homes to build parental trust in the residential scheme. Staff from both centres are continuing to work closely with SSA, taking opportunities for training wherever they are provided.

The SSA is sufficiently appreciative of our work to have asked us to run a residential school in Kozhikolli village for 100 children. The building will be constructed this year and the school will begin to function next year.

Elementary education

i. Primary

Vidyodaya School

2014 was a year of change at Vidyodaya. After the end-of-year break, Vidyodaya School resumed in June 2014 with Children between 1-5th standard. The school has now been recognised by the government of India under the 2009 Right to Education Act. At Vidyodaya School importance is given not just to academic development of the children; handicrafts, innovative project work, drawing, painting and theatre all form part of children’s education. Great importance is also given to adivasi traditional songs, dance and story-telling. 47 children currently attend the school. Almost all are adivasis, and most are first-generation learners. Most children get to school by bus, travelling in from their villages in the surrounding hills. The teachers at Vidyodaya school are drawn from adivasi and non-adivasi communities. Some were themselves trained through the school.

Today the school functions as an example of what can be achieved: the school is distinctive for its atmosphere of peaceful cooperation, near absence of disciplinary problems, and sky high retention rates.

Table 1. A Snapshot of Vidyodaya School

Question	Answer
Who works here?	Teachers, non-teaching staff, volunteers
What is the curriculum?	Plans, lessons, extra-curricular activities, learning adivasi knowledge, story, dance, tribal songs, tribal dance, riddles, story writing, storytelling
What teaching and learning materials are used?	Objects - observe, touch and feel, do, collect cards, picture description, visualise, listening, puzzles, local trips, sharing knowledge

What are the routines?	Prayer, ragi break, lessons, library, craft, games, puzzles, newspaper reading, indoor games, lunch, cleaning duties, weekend holidays, celebrations, meetings, trainings, health projects, care takings ¹ , letter writing (teacher and students), experiments, dramas, sharing
What happens in class?	Learning activities, interaction between teacher and students, sharing knowledge, (s-t, s-s), building relationships (s-t;s-s), building/developing language skills (talking, writing reading, listening), solving problems, helping each other
What do children do?	<p>Activities: craft, games, drama, singing songs (tribal, non-tribal), dance, reading storybooks, writing, drawing, listening</p> <p>Speaking, puzzles, duties, learning (from teachers, from each other)</p> <p>Newspaper readings, letter writing, playing, sharing, experiments, storytelling, organising functions, helping teachers/non-teaching staff, elders take care of youngsters, watching movie, learning, using computers</p>
What do staff do?	<p>Teachers: teach, planning, support the kids, expose/sharing knowledge, plan/organising, 'run' the school, learning from students, sharing personal lives</p> <p>Volunteers: support, help out, learn, teach, share, friendly</p> <p>Non-teaching staff: sharing, supporting teachers, cleaning, taking care of teachers and students, cooking, office work, accounts</p>
What are the school buildings and equipment like?	<p>School buildings: classrooms, lab, library, toilets, staffroom, kitchen, hall</p> <p>Equipment/material: for games, crafts, science/experiment materials, library (books), music, movies, teaching materials, computers/laptops, tablet computers, projector, carpets and furniture, blackboards, shelves, cupboards</p>

What were some of the main achievements of children?²

No dropout; high level of self-discipline; cooperative learning

1

Check what this means

2

2013-2014

Came regularly to school; improved in studies; speech competition – took part in a competition – children here were the only ones who completed their speech (judges felt that their diction was far better than children from the other schools); project – painting; carpentry; tailoring; drawing competition;

Apart from their studies, what other activities were children involved in?

Co-curricular activities like crafts, indoor games, puzzles, library books, computers, cultural studies, songs, dance, riddles, stories, musical instruments

What are the aims of Vidyodaya school?

Own ideas, individual confidence, cultural importance, good teacher-student relationships

What is distinctive about Vidyodaya school?

If you go to other schools the entire concentration is on writing; focus is on activities in order to understand a concept

A lot of time is given for that

Other schools give writing more importance.. teaching to the test.... Have to write fast and write lots

We don't believe it is enough to just give them writing skills

But in the lower classes we don't give so much just on writing

History - start with history of adivasis

Geog - start with geography of Gudalur

Stories from Kilini Penga (short stories of the Paniya tribe) - used in English and in Tamil

Gudalur (2013-14)

Within the main school building, there is also a centre for children who have dropped out of mainstream (typically government schools). This centre is supported by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan who has entrusted VBVT with the responsibility of providing these dropout children with a bridge back into formal education. After some time with us at the VBVT SSA Bridge Centre, they return to their families, better equipped to be able to continue and complete schooling.

Ayankolli (2013-14)

This centre has been provided with support in terms of pedagogical material, staff and even administrative support to establish it. The Ayyankolli Area Team is monitoring that SSA centre and keeping track of children's progress. SSA have provided support in terms of TLRs, and also in terms of training of two adivasi teachers - all the teachers have attended 2 days of training each month during the project period. SSA officials have also been visiting and monitoring progress of teachers and of children. These officials have come from Ooty and also from Chennai. Monitoring has also included checking the quality of food.

Education in both the Gudalur and Ayyankolli centres is arranged according to aptitude and ability in the first instance, before taking account of the age of the children. Three teaching groups have been set up and children study Maths, Tamil, Science, Social Studies and English within these groups. Craft and sports activities are also arranged. The differentiation strategy that has been adopted means, for example, that the youngest child might be placed in the middle group if he or she is at a particularly advanced stage. Children have opportunities to take on responsibility and contribute to the life of the centre. For example, monitors are chosen to assist with serving tea.

In both centres, cultural activities are also arranged, enabling the children to participate in activities such as adivasi dance and songs.

Village libraries

Village libraries operate in 66 villages. Children are trained to run the libraries, which consist of books and other learning material for children, designed to stimulate and support a fascination in learning; *current status? Dormant?*

Mobilising children's enrolment and attendance at school

Village-based education workers, a mainstay of our programme, have continued to encourage children's participation in formal education.

Secondary Education

Tuition centres

In July 2014, tuition centres were set up on a weekly basis in area centres at Erumad and Devala. These are set up to challenge the problems of access to quality learning and lack of in-home learning support systems that many adivasi children face in these rural areas. Teachers from Vidyodaya school put their experience to good use, setting up what are effectively temporary schools for half days on Saturday and Sunday. Children from local villages attend a day that begins with adivasi dancing, led by adivasi staff of that area centre. The focus then switches to study and the children are grouped appropriately according to age, and taking account also of ability. Currently English and Maths are taught as these core subjects are where many children attending government schools (the majority of attendees at these tuition centres) struggle most.

The table below indicates shows attendance at Devala centre in July:

Date	Boys	Girls	Total
6.7.2014	10	16	26
13.7.2014	10	15	25
20.7.2014	10	17	27
27.7.2014	13	19	32

A special feature of these tuition centres is the use of audio technology to facilitate learning. Content is recorded and then played back to children who then have the opportunity for further and consolidate learning in their own time before they attend next week's classes. We are also piloting the use of video technology to simulate

lessons, providing supplementary learning opportunities to enable children to stay on track to complete their core education in English, Maths and also Tamil.

Higher and vocational education

Couselling & Higher Education

Five people who were counselled to continue their education between April 2013 and March 2014.

No	Village and Area	M/ F	What Standard? What Age?	When was the Counselling?	Who was counselled?	What happened after the counselling?
1	Veranmangha Village, Ayyankolli Area	F	Degree: 1 st year Age : 23		Janaki Durga Vijayakumar	They could build up good relationship with other students.
2	Kottavayal Village, Devala Area	M	Degree: PG (Msc) 11 year Age : 24		Janaki Durga Vijayakumar	What to learn, Where to learn, How to learn, To know the importance and the values of courses,
3	Kaappukunnu Village, Erumadu Area	F	Degree: +2 Age : 17		Janaki Durga Vijayakumar	How to face and overcome the problems and difficulties based on that. (fee expenses, hard subjects,)
4	Ambravayal Village, Gudalur Area	F	Degree: +2 Age : 17		Janaki Durga Vijayakumar	To prepare and study according to the plans and time table.
5	Ambalapadi Village, Ponnani Area	M	Degree: +2 Age : 18		Janaki Durga Vijayakumar	

No. of children who were counselled in total between April 2013 and March 2014?

Male : 47,

Female : 61.

Total = 108 people

Three people who obtained scholarships between April 2013 and March 2014:

No	Village and Area	M/F	What Standard? What Age?	What were they able to do after getting this scholarships?
1	Moochikundu Village, Devala Area	F	Degree : Bsc Nursing Age : 16	With that scholarships she paid her admission fees for nursing course.
2	Veranmanga Village, Ayyankolli Area	F	Standard : +2 Age : 22	She used that scholarship for +2 text books and public exams fee.
3	Koodamoola Village, Gudalur Area	F	Standard : +2 Age : 16	She bought text books and paid exam fees in her scholarships.

No. of children who received govt. scholarships

Male : 13,

Female : 18.

Total = 31 people

Five people who were in higher education between April 2013 and March 2014.

No	Village and Area	M/F	What were they Studying? Where were they studying?
1	Moochikundu Village, Devala Area	F	1 st year Bsc Nursing. Bengaluru.
2	Kaappukunnu Village, Erumadu Area	M	1 st year Bsc. Govt. Arts & Science College, Ooty.
3	Kanchikolli Village, Sreemadurai Area	F	2 nd year Msc. Govt. Arts & Science College, Ooty.
4	Veranmanga Village, Ayyankolli	F	1 st year B.A Govt. Arts & Science College, Ooty.

	Area		
5	Kottavayal Village, Devala Area	M	1 st year Msc Bharathiar Arts & Science College, Ooty.

No. of children (m/f) were in higher education between April 2013 and March 2014?

Male : 21, Female : 37. Total = 58 people

Teacher training

The 10 teacher trainees have been through a comprehensive training programme preparing them for their work as teachers and also as village leaders.

Teacher Trainees self - Evaluation Batch - 2 (2013-14)

At the end of the 1st year the trainees had a written exam to evaluate their progress of and what their learning. When we tried the exam way of evaluating a student, we felt the students could have done better if evaluated in a different way. There was also the usual anxiety that they faced with exams. It did not also cover aspects that didn't have to do with subjects. So after completion of their second year, we conducted the evaluation in two parts. The first one was when the trainees gave their assessment of the trainee in their respective subjects based on their daily work. They included areas like reading, oral work, initiative in class, bonding with children, involvement in general school activities etc..in their evaluation. The second was an evaluation by the trainees about themselves - a self-evaluation. Following that there was - a one to one sharing between the trainer and a trainee. The trainee got to choose whom they would like to share their assessments with.

A summary of the one-to-one sessions and what came out of their self evaluation has been given below.

Self evaluation in year 2

- ***Interests*** - Many had mentioned that their interests in other areas had grown. One of them wanted to learn about computer hardware, while another wanted to know more about the legal system, and someone else wanted to build their accounting skills, others wanted to get opportunities to teach.
- ***Going on visits*** locally and outside Gudalur, helped them learn a lot, build confidence as they were quite afraid when going to a police station and jail), it helped them understand what happens there. They also saw how a court functioned.

- **Easy and difficult subjects** were varied. Almost all found health education difficult. Many found Tamil and Science easy but parts of Tamil tough, English was easy for some but difficult for others. Many found, teaching in the earlier days difficult, but gradually got over it and it became easier. Many also felt new subjects like Psychology and Philosophy were interesting but difficult.
- **Strengths and weaknesses** - Each one also evaluated their strengths and weaknesses. Some talked about their capabilities such as public speaking, thinking clearly, expressing what they think, etc. as weaknesses which they have to work on. For some these same abilities were strengths. Many have mentioned that confidence has improved which is now their strength.
- **Teaching abilities** - They also evaluated upto what level they could teach. Some said upto class 5 or 8 etc., but some also specified the subject - along with the class level - showing how they have evaluated their own skills carefully. Interestingly many of the trainers felt that there was no disparity in their evaluation of the student. Self evaluation and trainer evaluation matched quite well.
- **New things learnt** - Many have mentioned that they have learnt many new things after coming for training. Making different items in craft class, preparing learning material and learning how to use them in class were some of the new activities. Their knowledge about the Adivasis in other places in Gudalur and Pandalur taluks and elsewhere in the world was a new topic for them. Many have spoken about the importance of group time helping in decision making, building unity. Some have also seen it as a learning experience about how to conduct meetings.
- Writing lesson plans, learning new songs especially adivasi songs, new games, wall newspaper, places outside the school like the jail, court etc, about AMS - its history and role in Adivasi community, were all part of the many things they had listed out in their assessments about what they learnt at training, and the list goes on and on.

Challenges (2013-14)

They had to become accustomed to a different kind of learning - less hierarchy, less Rote learning; different relationship with pupils; different levels within the group
Absenteeism had been an issue;

17 trainees joined; few dropped out - marriage, love affairs, illness

Love affairs were a challenge

Very young - 16-18; youngest - 15 years

Pressures of adjusting to a new environment

Vocational training (2013-14)

Five youths underwent vocational training between April 2013 and March 2014 in a training insitute.

No	Village and Area	M/F	What were they trained in
1	Kaappukunnu Village, Erumadu Area	M	They are doing their 1 st year of training (course chosen is plumber and fitter) in I.T.I. Govt. Training Centre in Uppatti.
2	Theyyakunni Village, Erumadu Area	M	
3	Koottaattu Village, Erumadu Area	M	
4	Kariashola Village, Erumadu Area	M	
5	Devarshola Village, Devarshola Area	M	

Number of people (m/f) participated in vocational training between April 2013 and March 2014.

Male : 24, Female : 13. Total = 37 people

As mentioned before, awareness informations and trainings have been given in the counselling. In 350 students, 108 students only participated. We have to plan and make all the other students to participate in the counselling.

The reasons why children are not able to participate in the counselling :

*due to their classes, *long distance from the village,

More than 600 students are doing their higher studies, (X & above, degree, professional course) At present, we could able to give scholarships only for 31 students. If we give scholarships to all the students, it will be very useful and supportive for them to continue their studies. So, we should try and give scholarships for all the students and make them do their higher studies

At present we could help only 58 students in their higher studies like degrees and professional courses. Hereafter, we should be able to help and support the above +2

students based on their group/skills to continue their higher studies. We have to plan and support all the 400 students to continue their studies.

Computer classes (2013-14)

SSA students – 1 session

Vidyodaya students – 1 session

Teachers

Teacher trainees – 40 sessions

Area accountant – 20 sessions

Conclusion

Over the last four years the thrust of the project has been to Build Social Capital in the villages which sorely lack any educational idea. The Vidyodaya Resource Center has been the vehicle to train various levels of personnel and make them available to the community. Taking on a batch of young drop outs from the villages, VBVT has trained them through a two -year intensive course to become teachers capable of teaching primary level. After the completion of the first teachers training course, 15 young teachers went on to work in villages and study centers while some others are now recruited by Government school as volunteer teachers in the Tribal schools. The subsequent teacher training program is training another batch of 15 teachers. Besides this, the Centre trains Village librarians, Study centres guides, Education coordinators, Village education workers and trainers training.

The Vidyodaya Resource Centre also conducts counseling for those aspiring to go for higher education as to what courses they can take and what subjects they need to take to do those courses. Over 330 youth have attended counseling sessions. For those who complete the schooling but do not want to pursue higher education and prefer skill based training and also for those who dropout of schools the Centre undertakes to place them for vocational training wither in institutes or as apprentices. So far 185 young boys and girls of the adivasi community have gone through vocational training across 22 identified trades.

The Vidyodaya School continues to be a model school for adivasi education. It averages around 90 children and has recently gone up to Class 10. A number of innovative methodologies have been employed including incorporating the cultural knowledge and forms of the adivasi lives. It also doubles as a training ground for the Teacher Training programme. The school is managed entirely by an adivasi team.

Along with the work in the field of formal education we are focusing on finding ways to bring indigenous knowledge and cultural practices to the fore. We are training 3 young adivasi girls to conduct interviews and produce knowledge about their community. This information is being converted into displays about local histories, musical instruments and accessories used by the community etc.

With the success of the education programme we now have students aspiring for higher education. Lack of finances have been a major reason for not pursuing this and so various forms of financial support given to students has gone a long way. So far 177 students have also benefited from direct financial support in the form of loans and scholarships.