

**VISWA BHARATI VIDYODAYA TRUST
(VBVT)**

Annual Report

2014-15

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A Tribute to R. Surendiran

R. Surendiran, was the Principal of the Vidyodaya School and also the Managing Trustee of our Trust, Viswa Bharati Vidyodaya Trust. On the 22nd of February, 2015, he passed away due to a cardiac arrest at a young age of 42 years. Below is a tribute to him written by Ramdas and Rama who had mentored him since 1992, 23 long years.

Dear friends,

Forgive me for writing this general letter. Although it is a week since Surendiran passed away, I still find it hard to believe he is not going to be there tomorrow morning in school. So the thoughts continue to weigh heavily on both Rama and me.

Rama and I want to thank all of you for your thoughts this last week. It has been most helpful. Stan dropped the cycle trip and came back to be with us. Our children Smitha, Subhash and Harsha stayed with us day and night those first three days.

To say that it was shattering would be an understatement. Surendiran had joined us in 1992, undergone our first teacher training programme in 1996. He joined the school as a Tamil teacher in 1999. By 2006, he along with Shanthi and Janaki had formed a team to handle affairs at school. He slowly took over as headmaster of the school from Rama. By 2010 he was a member of the Trust board and he had with the help of Manoharan taught himself accounts. He began to take over the financial management of the Trust and has handled it entirely since then. This was a great relief for me as it was not something I enjoyed doing. In 2014 the Trust felt that he was the best person to take over as the Managing Trustee of the Trust and so last June he took over the responsibility of managing the Trust. He lived on campus and took care of every detail here.

He was more than just an academic - his Tamil classes were so interesting and we often sat outside to listen. He was a store-house of knowledge on herbs and a treated patients. He was Rama's doctor for her asthma. It was a fascinating experience to go for a walk with him through a forest. He was singer and had compiled a book of Mullukurmba songs. And, what a wonderful dancer he was! Often he presaged our education meetings with a poem in Tamil

and we had asked him to compile a book of poetry that he had written. For years he has taught all our school children their songs and dances. He was part of Eco-scape and always ready to go there to build things if it had an adivasi cultural context. Above all, he had an analytical mind and was a visionary, a very rare quality!

We started each day by meeting and so you can imagine what it meant to have to go back to school and not meet him there. But on Subhash's insistence and also because we realised that the hostel with its 40 children needed to be fed and taken care of, I finally dragged myself to school. To my surprise, I found that Kannan from Erumad, who had been assisting Surendiran in the hostel, had already come the previous day and purchased all the provisions and vegetables and made necessary arrangements with the govt. The hostel teachers had arranged for two of the male colleagues to stay overnight on campus. The teachers in the school had a brief prayer and had taken charge of things at the school. Gangatharan and Lalitha in the office had taken charge of the finance as salaries had to be paid this week. Rahul and Vijaykumar had taken charge of guests. Even Sreeja who is on maternity leave and not too well herself offered to shift to Gudalur to take over the accounts. There was really very little for me to do. The team had galvanized itself to take over! The support we got from the team especially some of the animators was wonderful.

Last week end I was not so confident and thought that what had been built over the years had collapsed, but now I am sure that we will continue with renewed strength and hope. We will never be able to fill the void that Surendiran had left because he was such a multi-faceted person, but we can still fulfill his dream which we talked of even as he walked away last Friday.

For Indira, his wife, who is a Pharmacist at our hospital, for Maya who is now studying in Class 12 and Mahesh in class 9, it is an inconsolable loss. For Rama and me too the loss is not just institutional but very personal. All one can be glad about is that he went the way he would have loved to – in the jungle, catching fish! May he rest peace among the trees and plants, the animals and birds, the flowing streams, all of which he was so close to his heart and held as sacred!

Yours

Ramdas and Rama

Background

The Viswa Bharati Vidyodaya Trust is a charitable body registered (no. 41 of 1993) under the Indian Trusts Act. Its registered office is in 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 Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai, - 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.

VBVT's work focuses on five key areas:

1. **Access to education** at the primary stage and beyond
2. Building supportive institutions within village communities: libraries, village education workers and teacher training
3. A **model school** run by adivasis: Vidyodaya school
4. Revival and preservation of **adivasi culture**
5. Ensuring quality **education for all**

In this context, VBVT's focus has been to ensure quality education for ALL adivasi children and provide a learning resource for the wider community through multi-tier interventions – at the pre-school level, the school level and at the level of community institutions

Early childhood education

-What are the aims?

While there have been many improvements against a variety of development indicators, this weakening of village and community structures has also resulted in problems like lack of access to ICDS centres resulting in growing malnutrition on the one hand and the deprivation of early childhood education. The inappropriateness and lack of access to government programmes has meant that a large number of children do not avail of the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services). **Our challenge is to ensure that all barriers to the ICDS are removed.**

The scope and reach of the education programme is to be strengthened by getting involved with Early Childhood Education at one end of the education spectrum and with programmes to ensure that children do not drop out at the other end.

-What plans are in place?

The strategy is to ensure that all the children in the pre-school age are part of the early childhood programmes in the 15 targeted adivasi villages and set them up as models.

- a) Expert organization working in the ECE field in Tamil nadu to conduct 4 training sessions to the persons from Area teams who are taking charge of ICDS.
- b) Hold 4 meetings with ICDS officials both at local and district level to discuss collaboration and work out a road map for the same.
- c) Send area teams and parents for exposure and training in what is involved in ECE.
- d) Draw up action-plan to work in the 15 ICDS centres located in adivasi villages comprising of enrollment, teacher support, child support and parenting.
- e) Holding meetings with the parents and community members on a regular basis
- f) Monitoring of the Centres on a regular basis to ensure that teachers and children attend the centres.
- g) Appoint adivasi teachers wherever necessary in the ICDS centres.

With plans for community-based action on ECD now in place for 15 villages, and working relationships in place with ICDS staff in 15 centres, work is ongoing to bring

about a shift amongst families towards seeking ICDS as an indispensable component of early childhood development provision.

VBVT decided to do a base line survey of all the children in the Balwadi-going age and from these to see how many actually utilised these centres. It was found that only 41% actually utilised these centres. Thus a major task was apprehended for the organisation in the coming years.

Area	November - 2015					
	No.of Total Balawadi age Children			Total No.of Balawadi going Children		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
Erumad	95	54	41	51	29	22
Ayyankolli	62	29	33	32	13	19
Devarshola	90	47	43	41	19	22
Devala	64	35	29	13	7	6
Gudalur	52	24	28	21	13	8
Srimadurai	91	42	49	35	18	17
Pattavayal	38	23	15	24	15	9
Ponnani	70	39	31	15	6	9
Total	562	293	269	232	120	112

Elementary Education

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. 51 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.

What are the aims of Vidyodaya school?

Education for the tribals
Give education without fear

Focus on building healthy relationships between teachers, students and parents

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.

Students

Groups – Primary

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

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

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
VIII	1	5	6	C level of NIOS
Group 1	6	3	9	B level of NIOS
Group3	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 Munnatra 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.

Teachers

The 12 teachers who have been in the school have continued. Six of these are adivasis. 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

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

h) Introduced all the group activities that had been neglected

- i) 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.
- j) 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

- a) to the values that the children were picking up
- b) especially the understanding of how it went against the very basis of learning among the adivasis
- c) that this was also perhaps the situation of the adivasi children studying in other schools

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.

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”

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

i. SSA Bridge Centre

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.

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?*

Secondary Education

Overview

-What are the aims and what plans are in place?

Supporting the Education staff at the Area and village levels (Education Coordinators and Village education workers) will be key the strategy so that they are able to motivate the community to ensure 100% enrolment and improve quality of education in government schools.

- d) Coverage of villages to reach 100% - 326 villages - so that no child in the Block is left out.
- e) Ensure that children in their villages attend both the ICDS centres and schools regularly.
- f) Ensure that the present number of 3000 children attending school does not drop and on the other hand improves
- g) Appoint 30 VEW's wherever necessary.
- h) Draw in actively the support of volunteers to ensure enrollment and retention.
- i) Interact with Government school teachers in a more positive manner to ensure their support for adivasi children.
- j) Initiate Study centres wherever necessary in order to provide educational support to children.
- k) VEW's to get actively involved in the Area Teams to implement their plans
- l) Attend the parents meetings of the school and village and participate actively based on issues raised at the Area meetings particularly with regard to issues in the schools.
- m) Attend regular meetings with the Area Education Coordinators to get inputs on dealing with the schools and children.

Community Engagement with Children

Coverage

Area	A'kolli	Devala	Devarshola	Erumad	Gudalur	Pattavayal	Ponnan i	Srimadurai	Total
Total Village	64	21	39	69	30	34	27	38	321

s									
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

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.

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.

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.

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

Conclusion and Future plans

The idea of beginning at the beginning, that is , with the smallest children, we hope will bear fruit. Again these are unchartered areas when it comes to adivasi communities. The ICDS staff have been somewhat cooperative and we hope to build a good rapport with them.

The 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 15 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 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.