A REPORT ON THE
EDUCATION AMONG THE ADIVASIS

PROJECT – END REPORT
for the period
2005 – 2008

SUBMITTED TO

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MUMBAI

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Some of our Village Education Workers

This report is dedicated
to honour the consistent and devoted efforts of our

Village Education Workers

who ensure that children go to school.

Contents

Overview

There comes a time in the life of any organisation when it feels that it has touched an important milestone. This is not a time to rest on its laurels, but a period of great introspection. It is a time to look back with pride and to look forward with trepidation. There is confusion and excitement at the thought of taking another leap. In the beginning it was a leap in the dark, but not so now. All the same the risks are high and the support that is needed is greater. This was how all of us felt when we began to review our work of last eight years in the middle of 2007.

When the academic year began in June 2007 and the Education Team got down to the routine of enrollment and admissions, they found in village after village that the parents had already taken care of all this themselves without any prompting. They had purchased books, bags and clothes and gone to the schools themselves with their children. This was a major departure from the past when they merely packed off their children to school. This showed a tremendous change in the attitude of the community towards education. When we began this project we thought that we would have to take a whole generation through, or at the least a period of ten years - seeing a child through 10 years of school - before such a change would take place. It had happened in eight years!

Obviously the strategies employed in taking the message across have been right. The perseverance of the Education team and the foresight of the leadership of the Adivasi Sangam have definitely contributed to this achievement. The community's firm belief that education is the only gift that they can give to their children has been redeemed.

This step relieves the Education team of the tedious task of having to go from village to village to check on children. They can now go on to concentrate on many other aspects particularly with the quality of education in the schools, skill formation and higher education.

A New Vision

In April of 2008 an Impact Assessment Study was done on the work of VBVT. As the report of this Study has not been finalized we are unable to quote from it. Nevertheless, since October of 2007 we had decided to assess for ourselves as to what has been the impact of the work over the years. The main indicator we felt would be to see how the community

viewed education. We knew that back in 1999 only 25% of the population was literate with only 17% of the women being literate. We also knew that their idea of education was attaining minimum levels of literacy and numeracy. Given this situation, in the first phase of our work we set our goal to achieve just primary level of schooling. In the last eight years the discussions in the villages have, however, given rise to a new understanding of education itself and therefore new dreams.

The community is now talking of a system of education which is not just good but is also in keeping with the cultural ethos of the adivasis. They realize that there is much of value in their own culture and this needs to be preserved. This they believe is something that they have to give to the rest of society. Thus they are trying, as it were, to straddle two ways of life, attempting to get the best from both.

Future Direction of Educational Process

In September of 2007 when the project supported by Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai came to an end, the Education Team felt that the time had come to look into the future. They said that we should articulate in some way what we had in mind and put it up for discussion. So a concept note was prepared and circulated among the adivasi leadership. This culminated in a two-day camp in early April to discuss this followed by the "All team meeting" at the end of April. The details of these meetings have been included here at the end of the report in the section, "Looking in to the Future". However, what is being emphasized here is the maturity of the community and their recognition of what is expected of them in the area of education. That they have a role and that they must fulfill that role has come clear to them. If their children are to achieve anything, it would depend entirely on the kind of emphasis that they lay on it rather than expect someone or some institution from the outside like the government to come in and drop it on their laps.

Where do we stand now

Following this exercise, each of the Area Teams took it upon themselves to review the educational status village by village. A similar exercise – more a desk review – was done in mid-2005. This was mentioned in the report of August 2005. At that time the parameters were

- 100% Enrollment
- No dropouts
- 75% Attendance

- Children going to High school or Higher secondary school
- Parents knowledge of children's educational status
- Children going to school Without VEWs support
- Traditional knowledge – Forest, herbal medicines, etc.
- Cultural knowledge – songs, dances, stories etc.

The villages were colour coded with red being the worst and green being the best and yellow and blue in between. It was found that 16% of the 223 villages covered were still in the red. Secondly, of these 75% were Paniya villages, 13% Kattunaicken and 12% Bettakurumbas. From amongst the Paniya villages 18% were in the red, so also were 14% of the Kattunaicken villages and 14% of the Bettakurumba villages. This had given us a fairly clear picture of the areas where the emphasis had to be laid. Today there are no villages in the red. There are villages in the yellow and blue but definitely not in the red. And from a mere 23% in the green, over 70% are in the green as far as these parameters are concerned. As one can see from the parameters mentioned above they do not mention about the community's ideas on education or their vision. This is the new parameter that is now being talked of and advanced.

We have given below the quantitative data regarding the changes that have taken place over these years. Some of them are not different from the data that was provided in August of 2007 as nothing has changed since then. Wherever changes have taken place these have been added on. However, behind the data is hidden a lot of things that do not get reflected in the data. We have also added to this report the Log-frame Annexure that was submitted along with proposal wherein we had put down the Expected Outcomes. To this we have added another column Actual Outcome – 2007. This summarises the Outcomes that are put down in the report. To begin with we thought it would be good to look back on the objectives that we had set down in 2004 when the present proposals were drawn up and assess what have been achieved and where the shortfalls have been and attention needs to be focused.

A look at the Objectives set down in 2004

Our objective as stated in the first proposal was "**To ensure that every adivasi child receives at least primary education and can easily pursue schooling to whatever level they desire, in an environment that is supportive and culturally appropriate.**" We can state with confidence that the first part of this objective is in the process of completion.

The Objectives of the second Phase of the programme were:

1. **Expansion – Ensure every adivasi child completes Primary Education. This calls for expansion from 185 villages to all 303 villages.**

   There are still 16 villages to be covered to touch 100% coverage. These villages are villages that have a history of being adopted by other NGO's and have left them in a lurch. They have since become very suspicious of anyone. Sangam activities are being slowly expanded there.

2. **Quality Upgradation – to intervene in the schooling process to upgrade the quality of education.**

This is definitely an area of great concern for us. We have attempted to intervene in the schooling process but quite unsuccessfully. It is only since 2007 that the govt. schools have begun to promote the methods that we have been suggesting all along and so have recognised our resources. A number of training programmes for the govt. teachers have been conducted in the year 2007 for all Primary and Upper Primary teachers in Gudalur Block covering over 400 teachers.

3. **Human Resource Development - to train all levels of staff to carry on the process of education effectively.**

This is again an area that will call for emphasis in the next phase. Training at various levels has been conducted – village level for village librarians, Study centre guides, school teachers, govt. school teachers and so on. However, to make a larger impact a more planned approach is to be considered. During the last four years, we have also worked quite intensively with the Education Coordinators, who are taking a lot of initiative in identifying the issues that need the attention of the community.

4. **Skill Development – to place educated youth in skill training programmes to create new sources of employment and a purpose for education**

Although we began this programme with much apprehension as to whether the youth would take to learning new skills we were taken aback by the response. Initially only 50 persons from all the 8 Areas were willing to join but with a number of counseling sessions, the numbers jumped to over 280. Most of these persons have completed training and some are undergoing training. Interestingly only about 10% dropouts were recorded. This does not really mean that the entire youth are ready to move onto other occupations, but that people are ready to experiment with other areas of work is clear. What we were happy about is that the majority of the trainees were girls and this gave all of them an opportunity to come out of their confines and gain exposure.

5. **Sustainability – to ensure that of the process and programmes which have just begun sustain over the years by building up the capital required and the sources of support.**

VBVT is confident that it can raise the resources needed to keep some of the important programmes going as it has done since September of 2007, when the funds from SRTT was coming to an end. What needs to be emphasised here is that the main thrust of the work – schooling – will go on irrespective of whether VBVT intervenes or not any more. On this subject we would like to quote one of our leaders who when asked about sustainability of the work

that is being done replied `If enough people believe in it it will be sustainable.' That is probably the last word on the subject.

The unfortunate aspect here is that since schools for the poor teach next to nothing, it becomes essential to have parallel systems to provide for this and it is for this work that support has to be raised. For this purpose social capital in terms of persons in the villages who can support children have to be trained and put in place. This is a huge task and challenge. However, what is truly heartening in all this is the saving that parents have begun to put aside for their children in order to send them for higher education. What they put away is not just money but investment in the form of hope.

Pre-primary and primary school children

1) **Ensure 100% enrollment in the villages undertaken**
2) **Ensure 90% retention of those enrolled**
3) **To ensure that the quality of education received propels them to achieve grades over 50% on completion**
- *100% enrollment ensured*
- *Retention:*
    Primary level – 96%
- *Attendance – 70%*
- *29 of the Villages have stopped their Workers and children are going to school on their own. 5 new ones have been taken in new villages that are being covered. There are 43 of them at present.*
- *Improvement in Grades is noted among the children who are attending the Tuition centres*

Middle school and secondary school children

1) **To ensure that 100% of those children completing primary school enroll into middle school.**
2) **Ensure that 90% of those enrolled retain in school**
3) **100% of children completing middle school to enroll in secondary school**
4) **75% of those enrolled in Sec. School complete it.**
- *100% enrollment is ensured at Middle school. All of them don't continue to Secondary school.*
- *81% Retention at Middle and High school level. The other side of the coin is that 19% of the Children are dropping out at this stage. This is a matter of grave concern and happens because at the Primary level their academic foundations are very poor and so are unable to cope with the classes.*
- *95% Retention at Class 5 & 6 levels is ensured.*

Students going in for higher education

1) To ensure that they complete the courses undertaken
2) To provide scholarship support wherever needed.
80 children applied for this over the last three years and were given support to the extent of Rs. 60000 in the form of cash or materials. The support covers 50% of their costs, the rest has to come from them, except in exceptional cases. This is steadily increasing each year as the Children go on to higher levels. An attempt is being made to create a separate fund for this.
3) To counsel the students on their possible vocations
- *Every year in every Area Centre at least two counseling sessions were held for Children in classes 7 upwards. This was to inform them about the opportunities that exist.*
- *Over 60 students in the High school level are enrolled in the computer classes run at the Area Offices providing them with the incentive to carry on studying.*

Out of school Youth

1) To provide skill training to educated youth in agriculture and related industries.
- *Enrollment in employment exchange has also increased their opportunities.*

    The fact that 288 young persons have come forward for training shows that this is an option that has opened up for the community. A wide variety of jobs have been created – nurses, lab technicians, accountants, traders, carpenters, masons, tailors and so on. For women this has been a tremendous opportunity to move away from traditional work places and find new avenues. We have also had only 10% dropouts which is very good compared to our previous experiences where we have had practically 100%.

There is no getting away from the fact that we have not made much headway in ensuring quality in education offered in the govt. schools in spite of all our achievements in other areas. This was the main plank on which we began this phase and we have not been able to make the essential breakthrough. We feel now that we must at all costs do so even if it means having to take on the challenge of running parallel systems. Through tests conducted periodically we now know what the problem areas are and what needs to be done.

However, there is little initiative from the govt. end for collaboration. We note a lack of seriousness among most teachers. (Strangely enough the Malayalam school teachers of govt schools take a lot more interest and the results of these Children are very much better while the Tamil ones are pathetic.) From VBVT's side every effort was made to reach out to the children and provide them with educational support through Village Libraries, Study centres, Tutorials and camps. Given the number of villages to be reached, this was not adequate. However, wherever children were part of such activities, there is a tangible change in their attitude and capabilities.

For VBVT, this assessment gives a clear indication as to what areas we can now leave to the community to take care of and what we need to concentrate on in the coming years and put in place. VBVT has also sought and obtained accreditation form the National Institute of Open Schooling which now opens up the possibility of having centres in the villages which can teach up to the primary levels if we can also train personnel who can teach in these centres.

Training which has so far been conducted on a part time basis can no more be done in that fashion and a full time training team needs to work. Secondly attempting to get tribal youth who have had some education in the past to teach is not working out well as their levels are rather low and they are otherwise occupied. Getting local non-tribals to teach is worse as their levels are also low and besides they have little understanding of what is required of them while dealing with adivasi children. Thus it is clear that we must build our social capital from amongst the children who are growing up and are in schools at present. These young minds have to be motivated to teach others and learn for themselves.

Higher education and skill development programmes are also going to be the challenges of the future.

The Programmes

We have here taken a closer look at all the programmes that we have undertaken to see how they progressed or floundered and to assess their impact.

1.0 Village Education Programmes

1.1 Coverage

All the villages that have Sangams have been covered. There are, as can be seen from the Table below, some villages that are under other NGO's. Unfortunately our relationship with these NGO's is not amicable as their approach is one of charity and without any long-term vision. This goes against the very grain of what we have been doing so far which is to get people to manage their own affairs and not depend on anyone. Leaders in these villages have much to lose in terms of benefits from these organisations and they do not allow the Sangam to operate there. Nonetheless we have kept track of the children in these villages. Our attitude has been to wait and watch as all of them do not have consistent programmes and when the benefits stop people come back to the Sangam.

There are still 16 villages in Ayyankolli and Erumad Areas which are not touched by the Sangam, particularly because they are remote. Steps are now being taken to work with them also. In both these Areas there are a very large number of villages and many of them in outlying areas. It means that a large number of staff is required to work with all of them. That they will all be covered in the next year or so there is little doubt. All the work has been developed in an organic manner and so there is no attempt to force changes or loyalty. When someone joins the Sangam then it should be with conviction and they should take responsibility for their village.

1.1.1 Number of villages covered

Table 1

Coverage of adivasi villages

Area	Total No. of Villages	No. of villages covered by AMS	NAWA	CSI	Vanavasi Kalyan Kendra	CTRD	Total Covered
Gudalur	30	28					28
Devala	21	21					21
Ponnani	27	25				2	27
Erumad	52	34	3		1	6	44
Pattavayal	34	33					33
Srimadurai	31	31					31
Devarshola	38	38					38
Ayyankolli	64	25	14			19	58
Total	**296**	**235**	**17**	**0**	**1**	**27**	**280**

1.1.2 Number of children covered

The number of children covered has increased by 150% in the last 6 years. There has been a steady flow of around 15% increase in the number of children enrolled each year. There is 100% enrollment. This is confirmed as the Health Sector team has the entire details of all the Under five children and these are passed onto the Education team. So we know every child that has to be enrolled. The number of villages have also grown over the years and so the number of children going to school has also grown. The important aspect is that now no child is missed out and every child is accounted for. All the children's names are entered in the Village book in the Area Office and each year this is updated. So every child is tracked by the Education Team from the moment the child enters school. (The Health Team tracks the child before this.)

Another interesting aspect is that there are an equal number of girls attending school and not dropping out. The ratio of girls to boys is quite high in most of the Areas. The enrollment figures for the last two years show a larger number of girls to boys in the community itself – a very healthy sign.


School Going Adivasi Children (2007-08)
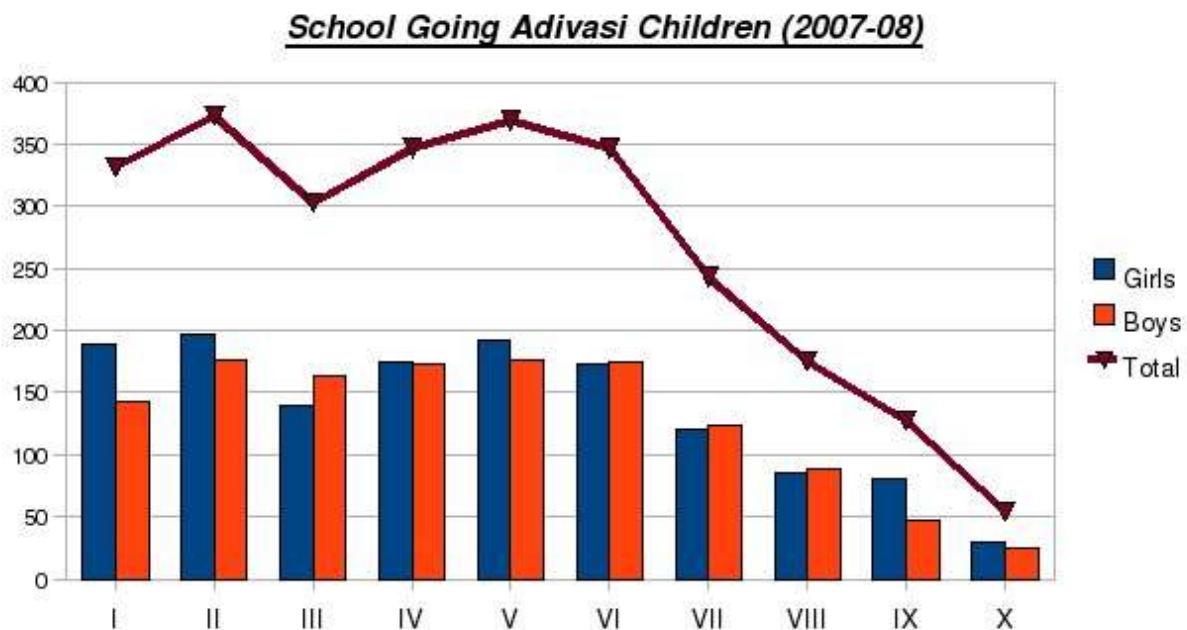
Drop-outs is definitely a matter of concern. We are able to stop this at the primary level but the academic pressures become too much for the children at the Middle and High school levels and so they dropout. From the graph below, we can clearly see the impact of our education intervention in increasing the enrollment of adivasi children in schools (the lines go higher and higher) and bringing down the drop-out rate, importantly delaying it as much as possible. In the earlier years, the children started dropping out of the school as early as 3rd standard itself; but our intensive work with the children and parents at the village level has managed to keep the children in schools as late as 7th standard.

School Going Children
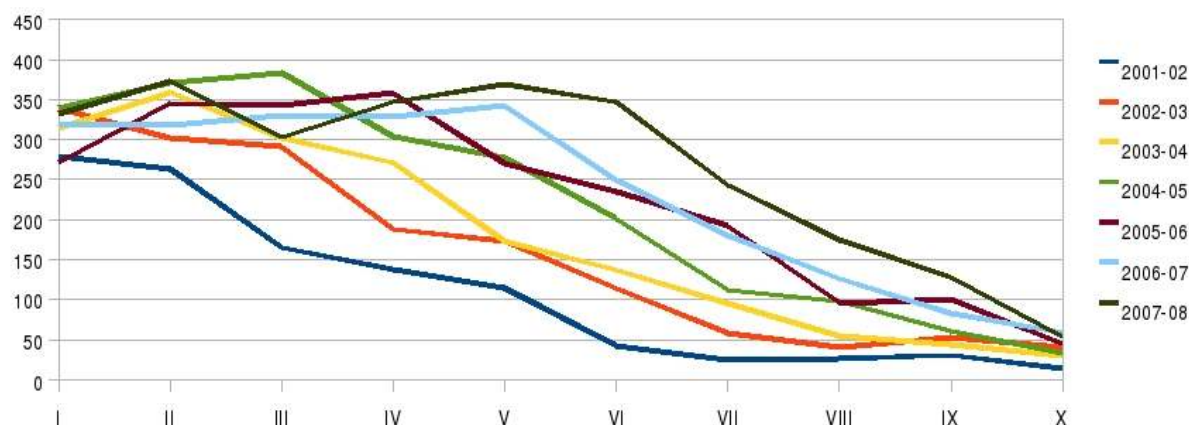
The foundations at the Primary level being poor they are unable to cope with the subjects, particularly Maths and English, when they get to higher levels. As can be seen from Table 4 the dropout rate is only 4% at the Primary level and 15% at the Middle and High school levels. This is alarming as far as we are concerned. The matter has been raised with the govt authorities but to no avail. The only answer they have is extra classes but this is not the solution as children usually have to travel far to get home. The only solution appears to be to have Study centres in the villages where there are trained teachers who can help them. This is an enormous task considering that we have 300 villages in a 50 km. radius. We may still have to do this as there is little hope that things will change for the better in the near future.

Attendance – Regularity in attending school continues to be a problem. Although the Table 5 shows that the Attendance percentage is around 70%, this is definitely not enough. The govt. schools being what they are, there is little incentive for children to regularly attend schools. Even the incentive of free food does not have any attraction for the adivasi children.

Secondly, these children earn substantially doing coffee and pepper picking during the season. These are jobs to assist their parents. They pick up what falls on the ground. However, whatever, they pick, is income for them and so once they taste money they continue to want it. So as soon as they can work they begin to work. Gudalur is fast becoming a labour-shortage area and so these children are lured away to work places. The wages are also exceptionally high. This has become a major problem affecting the entire education programme. The additional problem with this coffee and pepper picking is that it comes at the time just before their exams, from January to March. By the time they finish the season they have forgotten all that they have learnt and so fail in their exams.

Thirdly, festivals also are a major distraction for these children. The festivals also fall in the month of March and April. When these festivals take place the whole family travels out for a week or two if not more. A lot of effort is being made to stop this but this is also their cultural practice and so we are caught between the two things that we are promoting – their culture and their education.

Children from the same communities attend Vidyodaya School but we have no such problem there at all. The attendance table below shows an average over 80%. We therefore are of the firm belief that given an atmosphere that suits the child, any child would be willing to come to school happily irrespective of whatever distraction there is around them. At the end of the day parents too should be able to visualize what this whole process would lead to otherwise they too have little interest in it.

Table 2

School Going children

Area	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006- 07			2007- 08		
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Gudalur	118	193	224	347	362	258	230	488	353	281	634
Devala	142	159	202	213	227	102	125	227	112	111	223
Ponnani	82	152	174	205	220	105	114	219	125	126	251
Erumad	264	339	329	315	308	149	187	336	174	193	367
Pattavayal	63	177	205	216	211	126	129	255	146	132	278
Srimadurai	121	161	194	266	412	167	187	354	165	164	329
Devarshola	226	236	219	352	271	138	174	312	158	151	309
Ayyankolli	82	183	218	266	270	118	134	252	148	132	280
Total	**1098**	**1600**	**1765**	**2180**	**2281**	**1163**	**1280**	**2443**	**1381**	**1290**	**2671**

1.1.3 New Enrollment

Table 3

No. of Children enrolled in schools

Areas	2001 - 02	2002 - 03	2003 - 04	2004 - 05	2005 - 06	2006 - 07			2007 – 08		
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Gudalur	41	69	58	21	21	45	43	88	37	41	78
Devala	36	31	41	23	23	12	12	24	14	12	26
Ponnani	28	54	28	37	37	21	12	33	24	17	41
Erumad	60	27	46	22	22	22	18	40	29	26	55
Pattavayal	7	65	46	44	36	17	14	31	18	10	28
Srimadurai	34	36	28	55	60	21	13	34	17	12	29
Devarshola	54	33	23	39	39	33	31	64	28	13	41
Ayyankolli	19	24	37	34	33	7	8	15	22	12	34
Total	**279**	**339**	**307**	**275**	**271**	**178**	**151**	**329**	**189**	**143**	**332**

1.1.4 Dropouts

Table 4

No. of children dropped out of schools

Class	2005-06			2006-07		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
I	7	6	13			
II	8	9	17	11	1	12
III	10	15	25	8	5	13
IV	10	17	27	6	8	14
V	11	8	19	10	13	23
VI	14	35	49	8	16	24
VII	10	20	30	9	31	40
VIII	5	12	17	7	18	25
IX	9	12	21	4	15	19
X	8	6	14	13	19	32
Total	**92**	**140**	**232**	**76**	**126**	**202**

1.1.5 General Attendance

Table 5

Attendance of children

Areas	Sept – 06 to Feb – 06		Sept – 06 to		Sep. 07 to	
	Villages covered	Attendance %	Villages covered	%	Villages Covered	%
Gudalur	16	75	16	70	16	
Devala	14	79	11	80	11	81
Ponnani	22	76	22	81	22	79
Erumad	10	79	10	80	10	74
Pattavayal	13	63	13	70	13	75
Srimadurai	26	91	26	80	26	94
Devarshola	18	74	17	79	18	79
Ayyankolli	16	75	13	57	16	51
Total	**135**	**76**	**128**	**75**	**128**	**67**

1.2 Village Education Workers

These Village Education Workers have been the backbone of the programme. Their task was very simple in the initial years – pick up the children from the village or villages, take them to the school, wait there till school was over and bring them back. Later an additional job was given to them to liaison between the school and the parents. At one time there were as many as 67 of them and they brought more than half of the children to school. It must be admitted that they did their tasks and continue to do so with a commitment that is exceptional. Most of these persons are the old people of the village. All they get is a tea allowance from us. Besides these persons who are paid there have been over 30 volunteers – both young and old, Sangham leaders, youth leaders, and so on who took it upon themselves to oversee that Children went to school. Over these seven years as many as seven of the older ones have died. This is why we have dedicated this report to honour all of them.

There are 43 of the paid ones still working. So far 29 of them have left off their work as the children are going to school on their own. Five new ones have been taken on where new villages have been covered under the programme. As more new villages are taken on, we will identify new village workers for these villages as well. Initially we felt that Village education Workers programme should at some point be stopped. We now realize that this programme will always continue as long as there are very small children who have to be taken long distances and also through forests. Interestingly, some of these persons have also doubled as health volunteers for their villages.

Ajji goes to school

Nobody knows Ajji's name or how old she is – she's just Ajji – Grandmother - to a whole generation of children from Kadichankolli village. For 8 years she escorted children from the village to school in Devarshola town - a trek of 5 kilometers. Rain or shine, she's on the road at 8 in the morning, telling the children one story after another as they go up and down the hills.

The distance is too long for her to come back to the village and go again to pick up the children in the evening. So she sits at the gate of the school, chews paan, has a tea for lunch. In the evening she takes the children back, but now it is the other way round - the _children_ are telling _her_ their stories one after the other.

We have had over a hundred such persons, mostly old, some young. Some we gave a tea allowance, the rest were purely voluntary. These are our Village Education Workers – the people who ensure that every child goes to school, and does so regularly.

Some of them have died in the last few years, while others have decided that they do not need to carry on as the children are going to school on their own. There are still 43 of these Village Education Workers and Ajji sums up their role - I cannot walk that far anymore but I always stand outside every morning and watch the children walk to a better future !

This is one of those exceptional ideas that came up when we did Area level planning and wanted to know how to ensure regularity. This small intervention has made such a huge impact in the educational status of the community. It was these elders who were also able to break the fear that the people had in entering the schools and taking on the teachers. For the children too it was an enjoyable experience each morning and evening walking with an elder who could keep them engaged with stories of one kind or another.

1.2.1 No. of children taken to school

Table 6

Children taken to school by VEWs

| Areas | Sept-06 to Feb-07 | | | | Feb 07 to Aug-07 | | | | Sep 07 to Apr 08 | | | |
| | VEW | No. of Students | | | VEW | No. of Students | | | VEW | No. of Students | | |
		G	B	Total		G	B	T		G	B	T
Gudalur	7	51	42	93	4	51	42	93	2	16	9	25
Devala	6	58	52	110	5	44	35	79	5	79	44	123
Ponnani	5	59	60	119	2	33	30	63	-	-	-	-
Erumad	7	42	53	95	6	46	46	92	6	63	55	118
Pattavayal	8	57	63	120	7	59	53	112	7	59	53	112
Srimadurai	15	122	136	258	5	89	96	185	5	28	38	66
Devarshola	10	54	54	108	9	62	58	120	10	69	60	129
Ayyankolli	10	64	58	122	9	61	53	114	8	101	59	160
Total	**68**	**507**	**518**	**1025**	**47**	**445**	**413**	**858**	**43**	**415**	**318**	**733**

1.3 Study centres & Library Activities

Study Centres as we have them today is something that has evolved over the last three years. When we began we decided to have Tuition Centres where a teacher would be present and teach children for two hours every day in the evenings after school. Once we began we realised that it was almost impossible to find teachers, whether tribals or non-tribals who were capable of teaching up to the primary level. Following the review by Dr. L.S. Saraswathi in 2005 we decided to drop this idea and amalgamate the Tuition centre and the Study centre ideas. The Study centre as planned initially was to be just a place in a village where children could come at the end of the day and congregate to do their home work and would be supervised by a person from the village if such a person could be found.

1.3.1 Study Centres

Given the fact that we could not find anyone who could be trained to teach in a tuition centre, it was decided that we promote Study Centres where we could have not teachers, but Guides to supervise. These Guides could be persons with some education and they needed to conduct some indoor activities and supervise the children and take care of the centre. They would also ensure that children read the story books that were made available.

There is no doubt in the minds of all the people that these Study Centres are essential and as an idea it is the most crucial, as there were no places in most of the villages where children could sit together and study. This situation was made worse in the monsoon season which is nearly six months of the academic year. Besides, as children went into higher classes they needed the time and space to work at home. All these needs were taken care of by the idea of the Study centre.

Table 7

Status of Study Centres

Areas	Study centre	Guides	Students		
			Girls	Boys	Total
Gudalur	0	0	0	0	0
Devala	2	2	34	25	55
Ponnani	1	1	18	13	31
Erumad	3	5	39	44	83
Pattavayal	1	2	9	4	27
Srimadurai	1	1	11	17	28
Devarshola	0	0	0	0	0
Ayyankolli	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**8**	**11**	**111**	**103**	**214**

The Table above shows that there are only 8 centres left of the 13 that were initiated The numbers increase and decrease depending upon the availability of Guides. It has been a frustrating experience as we train a person for six months and then find that the person leaves. This has been especially so with the non-tribal persons and so it has been decided not to take any more non-tribals.

A learning space for Koottat

Koottat is a Paniya village in Erumad Area. It's a stone's throw from the Govt. Tribal Residential School and a little more from the Panchayat school in Erumad. Yet eight years ago only 3 children went to school. Today all the 45 children of the village are in school and 41 of them attend the Study centre in the village (4 are in a hostel).

Fifteen-year old Mani, an eighth class drop-out and a daily-wage worker, decided that he was not going to let the children of the village end up like him. In 2000 he began as a Village Education Worker taking children to school. Two years later when we started to talk of Tuition centres he immediately volunteered his services. There was only one problem – Mani himself had forgotten all that he had learnt in school. In 2003 he started to come for training. When we tested his academic levels he was at class 4 in Tamil and class 3 in Maths. But all credit to him, he was the only trainee who had 100% attendance. Today he is a confident teacher up to the primary level.

Three years back he decided that the dingy two-room tumble-down house was not suitable for studying and so began talking to the others about building a proper Study centre. The number of children were steadily growing over the years. From just 3 children, the numbers were growing to over 20 and there was no space and no light. The people agreed and so with financial support for the building materials alone from VBVT, the village people pitched in and built their centre where 41 children now sit comfortably.

Three years back Bindu a 12th passed girl from the Mullukurumba tribe joined Mani and together now they run an excellent educational centre. There are children from class 1 to class 9. All of them are divided into 4 groups depending upon their levels. Class begins at 5.30 pm and ends at 8 pm They begin with prayer and singing, go on to home work from school till 6.30. Then they have half an hour of reading books from the library . Following this they have an hour of Maths and Tamil. The levels for the subjects of each group is according to a specific plan that has been decided with the Study centre coordinator. On some days they have indoor games.

So now over the years the truants have become keen learners. Whether learning takes place in the govt school or not (usually not), in Koottat the learning growth chart is on a sharp upward trend.

There are seven other such centres today and more are slowly starting up. The main hurdle has been finding teachers, particularly from the adivasi community. Some villages experimented with taking on non-tribals but this is not working and their academic status is not any better. On the other hand tribal teachers, as in Koottat, definitely bring in a strong sense of belonging and so do better.

The main learning from this is that we need to take the older children from among those who are going to school and train them to take charge of these centres. This will ensure that the centre runs and at the same time we can motivate these children to learn and to teach others. This will be a major investment in the community and even if these youth leave they can go to another village and teach there.

It must also be pointed out that the centre in Kootatt, Erumad, is an excellent one and the best example of what is expected of such centres. All the other centres operate well but not with the same levels of commitment. For all that the person who runs this, Mani, is a wage worker and comes back in the evening after work to take class. But he has brought in discipline and fun and learning to the centre. He is assisted by another tribal girl Bindu who is also a good teacher. Between the two of them they do an excellent job. In fact all the children are doing so well that the govt school teachers insist that they attend the centre even if they do not attend the school.

All the Areas want to start Study centres but we cannot do so unless we can have a regular training programme which can give the necessary inputs that the guides need.

1.3.2 Village Libraries

In a little over a year the number of Village Libraries have doubled and is impressive. A great effort was made to reach out to every village where there was someone, even a school going child who was old enough to manage these libraries. The idea was to put books and learning material into the hands of the children so that they have access to possibilities other than their text books.

Table 8

Status of Village Libraries

Description	Feb 06 – Aug 06	Sept 06 – Feb 07	Feb 07 – April 08
Total No. of Books	989	1050	1877
Total No. of Story Cards	2000	2000	7000
No. of Books in Villages	854	854	854
No. of Story cards in Villages	800	1600	2300
No. of Village libraries in Operation	41	71	84
No. of children attending Village libraries	490	893	1014

There is no doubt that this has been one of the most successful ventures. As a strategy it was very effective to not only put learning materials into the village, but to have a village level institution that was managed by the village. The person to manage this library was chosen by the village and the place was arranged by them too. Light and other facilities were also provided by them. It was a way of bringing education right into the middle of the village. In many places one could see elders too sitting in on Sundays and going through these books.

The Village library merely consists of a steel trunk with story books, story cards and indoor games and puzzles. The Library is operated whenever they want but usually happens over the weekend. A place is decided – a veranda or the temple – and the trunk is taken there. The children gather and the librarian hands out the material and gets them back after the time is up. These librarians undergo monthly training as to how to use the materials, read the books out to others, in theatre, to act out stories, songs, drawing, puzzles and so on. They are also asked to keep an attendance of the children who attend the library.

We do not believe that all the 84 centres are running on par but the majority of them do function well. Again there is the problem of the Librarians moving to other villages, not

being able to attend the trainings and so not able to conduct the libraries properly and so on. There is no doubt that the village people wherever these have been started have cooperated well. The ball now lies in our court to get the act together and make the effort effective.

1.4 Area Coordinators

Area Coordinators have been the fulcrum around which all the educational work in the Areas have happened over these years. Wherever there have been Coordinators who have been in an Area for all the eight years the work and effect have been very good – Devala and Ponnani. In Erumad, Srimadurai, Devarshola and Ayyankolli the coordinators have been working for the last four years without any change and so these people have also been very effective. In Pattavayal, Sakunthala being a lady, needs the support of other male members to go to many of the outlying villages and this has hampered her work. Gudalur Area has had as many as three coordinators in the last three years with long months without anyone. The work picks up for a while and drops again. We have considered the possibility of working without anyone, just by sharing out the work among other members, but we find that for some more time we need full time people to oversee institutional work like libraries, study centres, dealing with government schools and so on.

Besides the Coordinators for each Area, we also have Programme coordinators for Library, Study centres and vocational placement. These three persons cover all the 8 Areas and work alongside the Area Coordinators

All these eleven persons have over these 8 years grown from just trying to manage their jobs to becoming leaders in their own right in the Areas. The abilities have also been enhanced - From communication skills, to conceptual understanding of the work, to recording and documenting of the processes, their output is now at a very high level. They are able to develop a vision of education and communicate the same to the other members of the community. They are able to critique the existing systems and find alternatives. They are able to bring the communities along to attempt new ideas.

One of the latest and most important steps that they have taken up has been children's savings. This was a wild idea that was tried out and within a year, as one can see from the Table below, the savings have amounted to over 23,000/-. This is not taking into account the money saved at the Vidyodaya school which would amount to another 30,000/-. We are moving very slowly in this programme as managing it has its own challenges. The savings is done through boxes distributed to the children.

These boxes have to be opened every month end and the amounts entered into the Pass books of each child. When there were only a few boxes the Area Coordinators were doing this but now with the number of boxes growing to over fifty, it is impossible for these people to manage them and so the other Area Team members have to be roped in. In addition a proper account has to be maintained both at the Area level and at the Taluk level. We have also not decided how to go about investing these amounts on behalf of the children. As far as the Area Coordinators are concerned they have done an excellent job of getting parents who have never saved anything in their lives to save for their children.

Table 9

Children's Savings from the Areas (Sep 06 to Apr 08)

Areas	No. of Children	Savings
Gudalur	15	729.25
Devala	73	8538.00
Ponnani	20	1421.00
Erumad	91	2847.00
Pattavayal	12	623.00
Srimadurai	39	1319.00
Devarshola	16	3943.00
Ayyankolli	32	3724.00
Total	**226**	**23244.25**

The Area Coordinators' main task is to coordinate and monitor all the educational work in their Area which is enrollment, admission, village libraries, study centres, visiting govt. schools, ensuring persons attend training programmes, follow up on children attending tutorials, check regularity, check on savings, conduct tests, children's camps and so on. However, in early 2008, the team decided that they can take on monitoring of all the programmes which was being done by the Education Coordinator Gangadharan with the help of Ramdas, in addition to whatever activities they were doing. This was an important step towards self-management. The role that VBVT has to play in ensuring implementation of programmes has been taken on by the members of the adivasi community.

Accordingly they have each taken additional responsibility for monitoring one or two programmes – Savings, Conducting of Tests, Monitoring of children's enrollment, attendance, retention; Training; Post high school support; Study Centres; libraries; vocational placement. They will in this way monitor each other's work and support each other and the Area Teams. Each of them have fixed their targets and schedules and have begun to work towards this. The entire responsibility of taking the programmes forward, planning them and executing them is now shifted to the Adivasi team both in Education sector and at the Area level. Decentralisation of responsibility is the next important step that is being planned and the Education team has moved in the right direction.

It must also be mentioned in this context of self-management that there are other areas also in which the members of the adivasi community have come forward. The school is one such area. The three teachers, Surendiran, Shanthi and Janaki manage the affairs of the school. The entire finances of the Trust is now being managed by Surendiran with support from Manoharan of ACCORD.

The Trust has also incorporated into it five members from the adivasi community bringing the total number of Trustees to nine. The new members are R. Surendiran, from the Education Team, P. Shanthi, teacher from the Vidyodaya School, Jaya, a parent and close supporter of the education work from the Srimadurai Area, Seetha, nurse at the Gudalur Adivasi hospital and also a parent of the Vidyodaya school and Kumaran, one of the senior community organisers who has been keenly associated with the Education work. We are clear that this is not to be a token representation, but the beginning of an active participation from the people.

1.5 Testing of Students

Conducting of tests as a way of establishing the academic levels of the children is being done for the last two years in a very systematic way. The Table below shows the results of the tests conducted in August of 2007 and although another round was to be conducted in January of 2008, it could not be done due to the changes that were being planned in the programmes and the Area Coordinators were otherwise preoccupied.

The team has decided to continue with these tests and make the results public to both the parents and to the school authorities. We hope that this will have some impact on the education system. In the meanwhile we are concentrating on the villages where there are Study centres and libraries to show the impact of these on the children.

In the first two years it was difficult for even the Area Coordinators to set question papers, to correct them, to mark them and to conduct the tests as children ran away when they realised that they had to write tests. Since July of 2006 we have got the system organised well. We have two persons whose sole responsibility is to set the papers, correct them and mark them. The conducting of the tests also is now done through camps and is not seen as a burden by the children. Tests are conducted of their reading, writing, comprehension and creative skills. The time of the tests have also been shortened to about half an hour in all.

Table 10

No. of children Tested

Description	No.	%
Total No. of students in 8 areas	1047	100 %
Target No. of students to be Tested	785	75 %
Actual No. of students Tested	590	56 %

Table 11

Grades Obtained

Description	III Std	IV Std	V Std	Total	%
Total No. of Students	349	354	344	1047	
No. of Students Tested	190	192	208	590	**56%**
Language (35%– 50%)	35	54	40	129	**22%**
Language (50– 100%)	116	63	62	241	**41%**
Maths (35%– 50%)	40	24	17	81	**14%**
Maths (50– 100%)	45	25	31	101	**17%**

1.6 Tutorial Support

This is an area that is going to require major support from now on. So far the kind of support that has been given is in the form of financial support for children studying in class 8 upwards for attending private tutorial classes and for children who needed books, clothes and so on. All of them, unless specially recommended by the Area Team, had to meet half the expenses or a part of the expenses.

As one can see from the Table below and from the total amount of money spent that there have not been many takers for this. There are a number of reasons. Initially it was because there were very few children going to class 8 and above. Secondly, these private tutorial centres are very competitive and insist on the children doing their work and do not stop at anything to compel the child including beating and abusing them. The adivasi children find this very difficult to take and so they drop out or are unwilling to go. This is very unfortunate and in spite of talking to these tutorial centres they continue to do so. So it is very rare that an adivasi child actually goes to such centres. Thirdly, to have to go to these centres after school and then walk a long way home is not very encouraging for them. They also have homework from the centre and the school to complete and they do not have facilities in the home for this. Private individual tuitions are being arranged wherever possible.

We now find that more and more children are moving into class 11 and 12 and into college. All these children need financial assistance for paying their tuition fees, books, clothes, etc. and they will definitely not be able to pay half or a third of the costs. A special

fund would have to be raised just for this. It is with this in view that the Savings scheme has been initiated.

Table 12

Tutorial support Provided

Particulars	Sept 05 to Aug 06	Sept-06 to Aug-07.
No. of students given financial support	15	44
No. of students completed Course	1	12
No. of students passed		9
No. of students continuing students	4	20
No. of students given Education Materials	20	21

2.0 Vidyodaya Resource and Training Centre

2.1 Training of Study centre guides and librarians

Training has undergone many changes over the last few months. The Study centre guide trainer, Kannan has been training the guides in their centres, as many of them needed support there. The trainees were also not attending their training sessions regularly so the training schedules and training content was changed. This was done for the Village librarians training too.

Instead of two consecutive days (which was residential) it was rescheduled to one day classes each month on two different days. The curriculum was made into specific modules which had to be completed by each of the trainees. If the trainer felt that a trainee was not confident enough then she would be asked to repeat the module. To begin with a Seven-stage module was drawn up. If any guide was absent on a particular day, she would have to do whatever she had missed before going on to what the others were doing. This way there was continuity for the person. Not coming for a training class was not seen as missing something or as a punishment. In the content too, plenty of preparation of

teaching aids and role play was introduced as it gave them something they could immediately implement in their centres. Similar changes were introduced for the librarians training.

Training of teachers whether at the village level or at the school has not been an easy task. The modules had to keep changing every time a new batch came in and sometimes for a new person. The requirements of different people varied so much that no specific model could be maintained. Trainees from the villages were also irregular and this added to the difficulty. Above all having only one full-time person in charge of training does not help and a multi-faceted team is called for if effective training can be done. As most of our training is for people from the villages we also need personnel who can follow them up at the village level and give them the support required. Unfortunately, we are terribly short of trainers. The three adivasi teachers in the school have been given "Trainers training" by Rama. However, this means that we lose three teachers from the school. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that without a training team this important area of work on which hinges the future of the children will not go forward.

2.2 Vidyodaya school teachers' training

Training for one more new teacher R. Shanthi started in January this year. Her training period is for a year. She is being trained in Science and Tamil for two groups.

She has

- Practiced writing a sample curriculum in each of the subjects.
- Studied the respective text books and explained the objectives of the lesson.
- Given guidance in the teaching methods
- Assisted a teacher to get some practical experience
- Reviewed the training classes with a trainer

The earlier trainee teacher Priya has finished her training period and is now handling Maths classes independently. She is also taking on other responsibilities like monitoring the attendance of children, collecting their bank money and keeping their savings accounts.

The other teachers had a two day workshop on the 4th and 5th February this year. The first day was spent in reviewing a report of a conference on Education. The various issues that were discussed at the conference was taken up for discussion after each teacher read out her review. The next day was a review of targets and activities of each group and a discussion about whether any inclusions were necessary.

From February after discussions on a new approach and the changes in our work we decided to have a bigger training team. The function of this team would be to review all the training done so far, plan the objectives of training for the future, plan new training etc. this team has met thrice since then and is working on the new tasks ahead.

Table 13

<p style="text-align:center;">Vidyodaya Resource and Training Centre</p>

Particulars	2005-06 Proposed	Till Sept-06 to Aug 07 Executed
VEW's Meeting & Training sessions	16	16
Study Centre Guides Training (No. of Days)	38	22
Area Co-coordinators Meeting	24	24
Programmes co-coordinators Meeting	48	48

3.0 Vocational Placement

Skill training was a very successful programme that was conducted in the last two years. In all 288 persons registered and underwent training in various trades. This was truly unimaginable. Surprisingly there were only 10 to 15% drop outs. However, we are not sure whether this trend will continue but the programme is being continued with the same fervour. The main task seems to be counseling. A lot of time was spent by the coordinator in each of the Area Centres talking to the youth. This had paid off well.

How exactly this program can be taken forward is being considered through a study by the senior members of AMS. The trend appears to be that those who drop out of school before they complete class 12 are interested in these programmes. Those who complete class 12 prefer to continue their education and these persons require a different kind of counseling which will help them to chose their careers. In any case, one thing is clear, that all these people have an option of picking a skill other than what they do traditionally, has come home to them. Even if some of the present generation do not opt for this, definitely the next generation will. We are also planning to have a tie-up with a Coimbatore based organization which undertakes skill training in a big way.

It must also be noted that the UPS project that was awarded to us gave this programme a tremendous boost and allowed us the possibility to experiment with areas that we would not have tried otherwise. We are now in the process of setting up units of the trainees. A soap making unit is already in operation and one more is planned in Erumad area. A tailoring unit is planned in Devala and a carpentry unit was operating until now in Devarshola Area. The cycle repair unit is running well in Erumad.

Reviewing the programme one can see that wherever the needs were clearly identified by the trainees they have benefited. All those who are undergoing training for the institutions that are connected with them, Ashwini, Just Change and ACCORD – nursing, pharmacy, accountants, trading, laboratory technician - have been absorbed straightaway. Masons and carpenters have ready employment. Some of the girls who completed tailoring have gone to the garment factories in Coimbatore for work and the driving trainees have begun to work with local taxis.

However, there is a shift in the trend one finds nowadays. With the shortage of labour in the plantations many of the boys in particular are being lured to work in the field at a very early age. With the wages also being very high the attraction is great. In the past the girls used to be taken away to far off places to work as domestic servants, but this has been put an end to following an agitation launched by AMS after the death of a young boy who had been taken away to work in Kerala.

It has become difficult to plan trainings, rather, we need to see what the youth want to learn and then find placements for them to train in. Counseling is the core of this programme and this needs to be done systematically in all the Areas with the children from the time they are in class 7 because they are already adolescents by then and are ready to make their own decisions over which the adivasi family has little say.

Table 14 – A

Vocational Training Programme Details (September 06 to August 07)

TATA Trust Project

Programme Name	Gudalur J	Gudalur C	Devala J	Devala C	Ponnani J	Ponnani C	Erumad J	Erumad C	Pattavayal J	Pattavayal C	Srimadurai J	Srimadurai C	D'shola J	D'shola C	Ayyankolly J	Ayyankolly C	Total J	Total C
Tailoring	5		9		3		10	4	3		3		0		0		**33**	**4**
Pharmacy															1		**1**	**0**
Painting(Board)							1										**1**	**0**
I.T.I							2	1									**2**	**1**
Lab							1										**1**	**0**
Computer course	3		2		0		18		0		3						**26**	**0**
Electronics Work											1						**1**	**0**
Motor Mechanism											0						**0**	**0**
Total	**8**	**0**	**11**	**0**	**3**	**0**	**32**	**4**	**3**	**0**	**7**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**65**	**5**

J – Joined;   C - Completed

Table 14 - B

<p align="center">Vocational Training Programme Details (September 06 to August 07)
UPS Project</p>

Programme Name	Gudalur J	Gudalur C	Devala J	Devala C	Ponnani J	Ponnani C	Erumad J	Erumad C	P'vayal J	P'vayal C	S'durai J	S'durai C	D'shola J	D'shola C	A'kolly J	A'kolly C	Total J	Total C
Tailoring	8		10		5		25	5	5		5				15	4	73	9
Soap Making					7		7				5						19	
Bamboo Basket Making	3																3	0
Carpentry													1				1	
Masonry / Hollow -block Making															10		10	
Trading	1		3		2		2						1		2		12	
Computer Hardware Training	5		2		1		23		2		6				1		40	1
Veterinary	1		3		1		2		3		2		1				13	
Nurse Training			1		1								1		2		5	
Accountant & Administration	1		2		1		2		1		1		1		1		10	
Driving							9		3		4				12		28	28
Nursery Management																		
Cycle Repair							4										4	
Book Binding	1	1															1	1
Tea field Management																		
Total	**20**	**1**	**21**		**18**		**156**	**5**	**14**		**23**		**5**		**82**	**4**	**219**	**39**

J – Joined;   C - Completed

4.0 Vidyodaya School

The school has come a long way since 1996 when 43 children from the adivasi community were first admitted. That year we decided to open the school to adivasis. Today all the children are adivasis except three (children of non-tribal staff). This has been the first and major achievement.

The second may well be the fact that the management of the school is now entirely by a team of three adivasi teachers. This includes all the financial aspects too.

The community has come to believe that their children are in no way less gifted than any child. Years of being denigrated about their capabilities in the Govt. Tribal Schools had made them believe that they as a community were not capable of academics. The message of Vidyodaya has spread far and wide and has had a major impact.

Members of the community are welcomed to the school and asked to talk about their lives and their histories, teach songs, dances, stories. Children do not see the school as something separate from their lives and their people. This is a dichotomy that is found in other schools and which children find difficult to bridge later in life.

We have had to involve parents in such a way that they too would be happy being part of the school just as their children are. We have tried hard to make them feel ownership over the school and their child's education. Parents meetings and meeting them in their homes has been a major task of the teachers. Earlier, parents meetings were very poorly attended and even those who came hardly spoke but today the situation is very different. Almost all parents attend and they even venture suggestions like – what more of Adivasi culture can they bring into the school? What ways can they help in the school? Willing to take the initiative to ensure that children not attending regularly come to school.

In terms of curriculum, the school has introduced the history and geography of the local tribes as part of its course. Elders and leaders are encouraged to come to the school and take class. Stories from the book 'Kilina Penga' (a collection of Paniya short stories) are

used as Language lessons.

Cooperation rather than competition is encouraged. The Adivasi child is a very non-aggressive one by nature and this atmosphere pervades the school.

Children are allowed to work at their pace and individual attention is given. Therefore even if children go away for long stretches of time for any reason, they can still come back and learn from where they left off.

There are no classes, only groups based on their levels and this allows for easy movement within the groups at anytime of the year. Children are not inhibited by this movement.

Various activities other than academics are encouraged – craft, games, theater, singing and so on. All this allows the child to find an area of interest and a place to flower. Academics is not the sole form of assessment.

Assessment is not based on marks and grades, but on the regular performance of the child. The child is assessed with equal intensity on non academic aspects.

In a community which had hardly anyone going to school just a few years back, finding children eagerly waiting to go to school is a great change. This comment has been made time and again by parents who speak of this difference in their children and children who go to other schools.

The regularity in attending schools is growing steadily. From a mere 50% some years back to nearly 95% today. Even during the monsoon we find children coming to school. (As they say, it is only elephants that can stop them.)

Children speak both English and Tamil fluently. We have had constant debates about

medium of instruction and have over the last 3 years arrived at a bilingual system.

After years of monitoring the health of the children, regular treatment of ailments, and giving nutritional supplement, today we have no major health issues. Just a few years back children seemed to have perpetual colds, leaky noses and cough. Good health ensures better attendance and better concentration. This is a very important and noticeable difference that we see.

Over the last three years we have had very good results in the Class 8 public exams and this has resulted in a large number of admissions. These children do very well when they leave school. When the first batch of children passed out, a local school refused to give admission for higher levels, but now our children are welcomed.

The school has obtained accreditation from the National institute of Open schooling as a study centre. This is a very great step as it allows the school to legitimately have courses that it wishes to and have children work at their own pace. This also allows for children from the Areas to come to Vidyodaya and write their exams here while they can study in the Study centres there.

Vidyodaya has been able to set the standard as to what is quality in education. Parents now know and are able to asses what other schools give. They realize that even the so-called good schools are not so good when it comes to getting children to understand concepts. They are only able to push children to memorize and pass exams but not to understand the topics. The ability to discern these aspects is a major achievement.

In the future Vidyodaya has to play a pivotal role in providing the right kind of education to the children of the Gudalur taluk and may well be for tribal education in the country.

Table 15

Class-wise student strength in 2007-08

Class	Boys	Girls	Total
I	8	17	**25**
II	6	6	**12**
III	10	8	**18**
IV	5	10	**15**
V	4	11	**15**
LC I	5	4	**9**
LC II	3	7	**10**
Total	**41**	**63**	**104**

LC – Learning Centre

Table 16

Tribe-wise student strength in 2007-08

Class	MK		BK		Paniya		Irulas		KN		N.T.		Total	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
I			3	5	1	4		1	3	7	1		**8**	**17**
II		1		4	3				3			1	**6**	**6**
III	1		4	1	2	2			3	5			**10**	**8**
IV				2	4	3			1	4		1	**5**	**10**
V	1	2		1	2	4		1	1	3			**4**	**11**
LC I	1			2	2	1	1		1	1			**5**	**4**
LC II	1		1	3		3			1	1			**3**	**7**
Total	**4**	**3**	**8**	**18**	**14**	**17**	**1**	**2**	**13**	**21**	**1**	**2**	**41**	**63**
Total	**7**		**26**		**31**		**3**		**34**		**3**		**104**	

MK – Mullakurumba; BK – Bettakurumba; KN – Kattunaicken; NT – Non-Tribals;
B – Boys; G – Girls; LC – Learning Centre

Table 17

Attendance percentage (2007-08)

Class	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
I std	81	73	83	73	77	72	78	82		64	77	73
II std	80	75	81	81	71	68	59	64		88	90	64
III std	84	81	80	71	73	73	77	74		85	84	53
IV std	87	85	83	81	83	75	80	85		88	85	79
V std	93	91	79	80	75	69	70	76		93	93	90
LC – I	93	94	97	97			87	92		99	100	98
LC – II	86	80	81	99	82	88	86	88		89	92	78

LC – Learning Centre

Table – 18

Vocational Exposure

Group	Learning Centre – II
Out patient (Hospital)	
Tailoring	2
Book Binding	2
Teaching	2
Agriculture	5
Pharmacy	1
Medical Laboratory	1
Nursing (Hospital)	1
Provision Shop	
Total	**14**

5.0 Government Teachers Consultation

The Dept. of education has for the first time decided to call VBVT to train its teachers. As Activity Based learning has been taken on by the government as its methodology for teaching at the primary level, they are open to accepting other methodologies of teaching. As VBVT was known to have adopted these methods and found it successful over the years the government has recognised the role of VBVT in training teachers.

The Plan for the training was set down as follows:

Objective:

To improve the quality of both Primary and Upper Primary education in the Gudalur Taluk by giving inputs to government teachers in teaching methodologies. This will definitely have an impact on the Adivasi children, the majority of whom go to government schools.

Process

The teachers were brought together in larger numbers usually around 40 to 50 in number. Most of them were interested, although not all. The time available was only two to three hours in a session. The sessions were held depending upon availability of free days for the teachers and so this may be once a month or once in two or three months. No regularity can be assured.

Areas of training – Mathematics and Language – English in particular

Conducted by – Rama Sastry and B. Ramdas with assistance of Education Team members, Kannan, Vijayakumar and Karalan

Plan

The broad issues that were covered in these training programme for Government teachers were as follows :

Introduction

- Role of Teachers
- Activity Based Learning – why children need it?
- Primary school text books are very good, but no training given to use them
- Introducing what we are going to do
- Preparation of teaching aids
- Explaining how the materials are to be used
- Use of the materials

English

- Introduction
- They must speak in English
- English not difficult to speak although difficult to write and read
- Not phonetic
- Listening essential - news, tapes
- Language teaching – what is involved
- Process of learning is to speak first, read and then only to write

Mathematics

The participants were split into three groups. Each group was given an activity – ascending and descending order, place value and preparation of work sheets.

Methodology

The group was divided into three and given different activities. One group was given Bingo, the second group was given a Memory game and third a spoken English exercise. The idea was to show how Bingo can be used to teach language as well as Maths, to get them to prepare the materials and to show that it can be done easily and not to depend on the printed materials all the time.

Following this the participants were asked to raise questions.

The first session was conducted for Upper Primary school teachers numbering around fifty. Most of them, especially the younger ones were very keen, but the older ones were not. The session was more a demonstration rather than a training. It was done on Science and how concepts in science could be explained through making the children do experiments. This session was conducted by Tarshish Thekaekara and was very successful.

Session 2 - Primary school teachers of two clusters - Erumad and Cherambadi divisions. The first session had 37 participants including 5 Head Masters and the second session had 32 participants including 3 Head Masters.

Session 3 – Primary and Middle school teachers from Gudalur Taluk at the Gudalur Govt. High School SSA office. Two sessions were held and each had 35 participants.

Session 4 – Primary school teachers from Gudalur Taluk. Two sessions were held and each session had 40 teachers.

From our end great effort was made to establish a long term contact with the SSA. However, this has not continued. Attempt was made through the director at Chennai but the person retired in the meanwhile and the new person did not show equal interest. We attempted to contact individual teachers and Head masters but this has not worked as they do not have the time or the permission to call us. Right now there is a tremendous backlash on the Activity based learning system from the teachers in Tamil Nadu. The SSA has put on hold its training because of this resistance.

Where do we go from here? The only thing to do appears to be to get the Parents associations to take up the matter of quality of education. Most of the public feel that once there are enough teachers the problem will be solved. So they on their own are investing in paying for teachers whom they appoint. These teachers are completely untrained and again they end up having the same problems. However, these parents' associations need to be educated just like was done with the adivasi community and we cannot look at the situation of the adivasi children alone but draw into the fold the rest of the public too.

6.0 Major Lessons learnt and Challenges Ahead

6.1 Looking Back

As we look back at all that has happened and take stock we note that there are many lessons that we have learnt and there are programmes that we need to be fine-tuned and systems that are to be put in place.

- First of all, we need to cover all the villages in the project area.
- Specific attention and plans to be made for some of the Kattunaicken and Paniya villages which are still lagging behind.
- We need to look for more imaginative methods of dealing with irregularity in schools.
- Establish study centres and Village libraries in all the villages.
- Bring together a multi-faceted training team that can work full-time in this area
- Train teachers at all levels so that good education can be given by the community.
- Test Children on a regular basis so that both parents and teachers are made aware of their academic status.
- Streamline the vocational placement and training programme.
- Provide financial support for those who are going in for higher studies.
- To get the Savings scheme to all the children in all the Areas.
- Above all, to get the Area Teams to plan and monitor all the programmes.

6.2 Looking Forward

The last two proposals were drawn up by VBVT in consultation with the adivasi teams but the programmes addressed specific needs related to schooling and education. The programmes did not arise out of an overall understanding of education. Today the leadership has gained a good understanding as to what is involved and what is to be expected. They can now see how these schemes and programmes that they are carrying out fit into a framework. Most importantly, they now have the capacity to decide whether to have them or not.

As mentioned earlier, it was at the two-day camp in April 2008 that a clear picture as to the aspirations of the people became clear and one could see long term vision is slowly emerging. This vision is crucial and underpins everything that they will do in the future and forms the core of the impact that VBVT has had on the community. It is for this reason that a fairly detailed account of the discussions is put down here.

Based on a critique of the present education system and our belief on what constitutes a good quality education, the main threads of the education system were articulated and the following goals for education were set down :

- Livelihood

- Retain cultural identity

- Gain social status/position vis-a-vis the rest of society

- Build self esteem and self confidence

The main aspects that need to be considered under each of these goals are :

Livelihood
• Traditional knowledge of Agriculture to be preserved
• to learn additional skills and vocations
• To learn about business transactions
• To preserve and pass on the knowledge of the forests and medicinal herbs

Retaining Cultural Identity
• Restructuring the governance systems of the communities.
• Building community-ness into the adivasi groups.
• Retaining the culture and rituals
• Encouraging use of mother tongue languages

Gain Social status / position vis-a-vis rest of society
• Preserve our values
• Gain mainstream education
• Get knowledge in life-skills – law, govt., police, banks, finances, health, etc.
• Develop the ability to manage our own institutions

Build Self esteem and Self confidence
• Not to have fear
• To have multiple skills
• Need to have the confidence to persevere and accomplish ideals

The community leaders are also reasonably clear on the strategies that would be used to achieve these goals. However, the important realisation were three:

1. That there were many aspects in their own culture and tradition that needed to be taught to the future generations.
2. That the purpose for obtaining mainstream education was to gain social position vis-a-vis the rest of society, not because they saw in it something of great learning value.
3. That one needed mainstream education to get a handle on what was happening in the present social, economic and political spheres which was still baffling the adivasis.

Viswa Bharati Vidyodaya's education intervention in the coming years should revolve around these issues and should address the challenges identified by the community.

7.0 Conclusion

The adivasi leaders at the end of the reflective camp held in April 2008 came to the conclusion that they cannot stay outside of the existing society anymore; instead, they must become part of it. However, their becoming a part of it should be with a full understanding of the implications and they should not be just absorbed into it at the lower end of the social, economic and political hierarchy.

Knowledge would equip them to enter into society on their own terms rather than be sucked into it and then be overwhelmed. Preserving their community-ness, preserving the forest and the environment, preserving the spirits that reside in all things through their culture and rituals, all these are purposes of education, even while the children equipped with the academic knowledge on Maths and Science. A better testimony to the future of their children could not have been detailed.

Annexure - 1

Assessment of Outcomes

Objectives	Strategies	Expected Outcomes	ACTUAL OUTCOME - 2008
Expansion to ensure 100% Primary Education	VEW's	• 100% enrollment at primary level • 90% retention at Primary level • 80% attendance • No. of villages not requiring VEW's	• 100% enrollment ensured • Retention: Primary level – 96% • Attendance – 70% • 29 of the Villages have stopped their Workers and Children are going to school on their own. 5 new ones have been taken. There are 43 of them at present.
	Village Level Institutions Tuition Centres	• 100% enrollment in Middle, Secondary Education • 75% Retention in High Schools • 90% Retention - vulnerable levels Class 5 & 6. • Improved Grades in academics • Involvement of community in Edu. Activity both at TC and school	• 100% enrollment is ensured at Middle school. All of them don't continue to Secondary school. • 81% Retention at Middle and High school level. • 95% Retention at Class 5 & 6 levels is ensured • Improvement in Grades is noted among the Children who are attending the Tuition centres • Community involvement in the centres is good but not so in schools except in two schools.

Objectives	Strategies	Expected Outcomes	ACTUAL OUTCOME - 2008
	Village Libraries	• Village communities owning their own libraries • Children and adults using the libraries • Retention in school • Improved reading, comprehension and grades	• 84 Libraries set up in villages. All of them have selected a volunteer to look after the library. They are undergoing training. • Children are definitely using the library and occasionally only adults. • Retention has improved • Reading abilities of Children have improved and to some extent comprehension but not so much their grades. The Librarians need more inputs for this to be achieved.
	Village Study Centres	• Involvement of community in education • Children's academic performance improves	• Altogether 22 Centres were started over the last 3 years, but only 10 are in operation now because of lack of teaching staff. • Community involvement very good at the centre • Children attending study centre have improved their academic performance, besides general knowledge and self confidence.
	Tutorial Fees	Students to continue and complete higher education	– 80 children applied for this over the last three years and were given support to the extent of Rs. 60000 in the form of cash or materials. The support covers 50% of their costs, the rest has to come from them, except in exceptional cases. – This is steadily increasing each year as the Children go on to higher levels. An attempt is being made to create a separate fund for this.

Objectives	Strategies	Expected Outcomes	ACTUAL OUTCOME - 2008
	Edu. Area Coordinators	100% coverage of villages in area 100% enrollment of students in the area 90% retention - improvement in grades 100% enrollment at class VI level - Motivated Govt. teachers - Study centers / TC in all villages - Area Education course	- Including the 45 villages covered by other NGO's the coverage is 280 of the 296 villages – 95%. There are 6 in Ayyankolli and Erumad and 2 in Gudalur that are to be covered, otherwise all the other 5 Areas have 100% coverage. 100% enrollment of the students in the villages is ensured. - Retention has also been over 90% 100% enrollment at Class 6 level is also ensured - Motivating of Govt. Teachers has not been possible but a feedback on the students have been given. - Study centres have been established in 10 villages where Guides were available but Village Libraries have been established in all the Areas – average of 10 in an Area. - Although Village level Education Committees have not been formed except in a few places, at the Area level a strong Committee has been formed in all the eight Areas. - They have improved their record maintenance abilities to a great extent. This has allowed for Area Teams to analyse and plan at the Area Level. - They have initiated Savings by the Children since 2007 and in the last year 206 Children have started and their Savings have amounted to Rs. 50000/- .

Objectives	Strategies	Expected Outcomes	ACTUAL OUTCOME - 2008
			• Stationery items to the tune of Rs. 4000 have been made available in the Area offices. This is to be used as rotating fund. Children can purchase their stationery at reduced price. Some of the village libraries have also begun to stock these stationery items.
Quality Upgradation	Conducting Tests	• Community's awareness of levels • Teachers awareness of levels • Improved quality in schools	– Tests were conducted in 2006-07 for 35% of the students in Classes 3 to 5 and for 56% in 2007-08. This was a great achievement in itself. – The grades remained very poor with only 61% passing in Tamil and 31% in Maths. – All the communities are now aware of what is involved in academic levels as these test results were used to educate them about it. – All the teachers are also aware of the levels of their students, although their only answer is to plead helplessness. – Improvement has not happened in the govt. schools as teachers feel that they have too many children to manage and that adivasi children do not study at home.
	Vidyodaya School	• Evolve as a model school • Possibility of Quality Higher education for adivasis through the open schools	• Vidyodaya has definitely evolved as a model school and even the SSA has come to recognize its impact. • The Open school option is about to materialise as the inspection is over and the school has been accredited as a Study Centre.

Objectives	Strategies	Expected Outcomes	ACTUAL OUTCOME - 2008
	Government schools intervention	• Qualitative Improvement in schools • Special Classes for Tribal Children	– Qualitative improvement in schools has not been possible as govt. teachers and officials have not welcomed our intervention. – Govt. schools could not give special attention to tribal children especially where they were in minority and so no special classes were taken. – The major breakthrough has been that VBVT has been called to conduct training programmes for all the govt. school primary and middle school teachers in Gudalur block by the SSA. Hopefully tis will lead to a lot more interaction with the adivasi team and the communities.
HR Development	Resource center	• Various levels of cadres knowledgeable in education • Persons capable of dealing with Govt. school staff • Personnel able to take up issues with Govt.	Trainings have been an essential part of the the work. Trainings have been conducted for various level staff: • <u>Trainers training</u> - This was for three of the adivasi teachers to become trainers. Concentration on pedagogy ▪ <u>Vidyodaya school teachers</u> - New teachers trained in our methods ▪ <u>Study centre Guides</u> - Upgradation of knowledge levels, use of materials and indoor games ▪ <u>Village librarians</u> - Handling of books, stoty reading, story telling, indoor games etc. ▪ <u>Village Education Workers</u> - Monthly once at the Area level. Dealing with parents, children and teachers

Objectives	Strategies	Expected Outcomes	ACTUAL OUTCOME - 2008
			• Govt. Primary and Middle school teachers - Approx. 300 teachers attended. Use of materials as part of Activity based learning, Language, Maths and Science • Area Education Coordinators - Once a month sessions. Dealing with govt. staff, teachers, initiating of community institutions and record maintenance
Skill Development	Vocational Training Listing and Placement	• Incentive created for continuing studies • Community becomes conscious of need for skill development • skilled work force creates additional capacity to earn	• Every year in every Area at least counseling sessions were held for Children in classes 7 upwards. This was to inform them about the opportunities that exist. • Over 60 students in the High school level are enrolled in the computer classes run at the Area Offices providing them with the incentive to carry on studying. • Enrollment in employment exchange has also increased their opportunities. • The fact that 288 young persons have come forward for training shows that this is an option that has opened up for the community. A wide variety of jobs have been created – nurses, lab technicians, accountants, traders, carpenters, masons, tailors and so on. For women this has been a tremendous opportunity to move away from traditional work places and find new avenues. We have also had only 10% dropouts which shows the change in attitude. • Their earning capacity has improved tremendously.

Objectives	Strategies	Expected Outcomes	ACTUAL OUTCOME - 2008
Sustainability/ Fund Raising	Fund Raising	• Create Corpus Funds of Rs. 50 lakhs for school ▪ Funds for continuation of programmes	• The target of creating a Corpus fund of Rs. 50 lakhs has not been met, but the possibility of raising that sum has been ensured. Already Rs. 20 lakhs has been raised. • Funds for the continuation of the programmes has been raised to some extent. As of now – Sept 2007 to March 2008 - almost 50% of the costs of the programme – around Rs. 6.5 lakhs has been raised by us and for the next six months – April 2008 to September 2008 - appr. Rs. 10 lakhs will be put in by VBVT. In future, some of the programmes can be self supported while others will have to be financed externally.