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Viswa Bharati Vidyodaya Trust

An Education Innovation Of Adivasi

Dear Friends,

Happy Diwali to you! As all of you have been generous with us during these past months of Corona lockdown we are happy to write to you again about the progress we have made here in spite of everything. We do hope you are well and it would be great if you can get back to us with your thoughts and ideas – even a short response would be welcome.

Schools in Tamil Nadu are gearing up to reopen after a very long gap of 18 months. Talking to the children here, we are able to sense excitement and eagerness among them to return to school. They are also concerned and anxious, not about the safety aspect but about the expectations the teachers might have of them. In one of our village engagements while we were conversing with the children, they shared *“It has been a really long time and we also did not get any online classes. Now we are in higher grades, we don’t know much. What will happen if we don’t know anything when we go back to school? Will the teacher be upset with us and scold us?”*

This conversation reinforced our belief that our success as teachers and facilitators mainly depend on how we relate to children and how they relate with us. All of us need to prepare ourselves to connect with children and meet them where they are. Learning then happens on

this foundation of relationship and meaning. Success isn't about bridging academic learning gaps/ loss and giving knowledge for children to acquire.

Social	
Learning Outcomes	Activity
Grade 1 (EVS)	
My Family - identify relationships	Prepare booklet
Differentiate living and non-living things	Picture and name card
Identify parts in our body	Chart
List the types of tests	Smell and tell, taste and tell
Puzzles (A series)	Puzzles
Grade 2 & 3 (EVS)	
List and identify types of fish	Draw types of fish and match
Parts and structure of fish	Practical and drawing
Plants and trees around us	Nature walk
List all animals and classify based on food habits	Match picture -> name card
Create wall newspaper	Drawing, collecting, pasting
Grade 4 & 5	
Identify seasons (revolution)	Videos, discussion
Draw village map and connect it to other maps	Drawing and map work
Adivasis and their relationship with fishing	Foodbook, pictures and sharing
Fishing equipment - traditional and modern	Pictures of equipment, comparison (good & bad)
Create a model of fishing equipment	Creating any equipment



Vidyodaya School

Through the last 4 months, once the second wave subsided and restrictions were lifted, we resumed our work with the children from both Vidyodaya and SSA school by gathering them in their villages or in nearby common areas. We first began the classes by conversing with children and shadowing them to understand how they spent their day and what activities they were engaged in. The intent behind this was to learn more about the context and situation of the children based on which we could then develop the curriculum.

Almost all the children were engaged in activities like fishing, toy making, helping their parents at their workplaces and farms, gathering mushrooms, helping out with house work and playing games. We developed an integrated curriculum which connected learning of languages, maths and science to these experiences. This approach not only made academic learning easier after a long gap, but also showed them what we valued and acknowledged what they had learnt during this time. Needless to say, childrens' participation and engagement in these classes were high, making the process of learning meaningful.

In the pictures: Children learning vocabulary through drawing and narrating their fishing experiences; Curriculum for Social Studies centred on childrens' experiences



Community Learning Centres

Currently, 84 children are enrolled across 5 Learning Centres. Children are actively engaged in a variety of activities -- experiments, songs, games, story-telling, dance, art and craft, solving worksheets and puzzles. All the facilitators feel that these activities have sparked interest in learning among the children and that they also complement academic learning.

Having established 5 Community Learning Centres steadily over the last few months, we have learnt much about the realities as well as aspirations of the community. These Learning Centres have shown the community and us, possibilities of having a strong support system for the children at the village level. It isn't a 'utopian' or a 'wishful' idea anymore but rather a concrete one that people and children see this as a solution to the educational challenges they face. And most importantly they see this as an initiative that they are capable of taking charge of, in the future.

Through a series of participative discussions and workshops, we have designed an Integrated Community Education Program that aims to strengthen communities' engagement in the education of their children by creating strong support systems -- one

that is inclusive and respectful of adivasi way of life -- for the children that will improve their enrolment, retention and learning.

In the pictures: A glimpse into the Learning Centres where children are participating enthusiastically while doing various activities



Teacher Facilitators Education Programme

Together with 8 adivasi youth, we piloted the Teacher-Facilitator Education Program in August. This is a year-long initiative which aims to support and build adivasi youth to work with the community, using the skills, tools and perspectives of meaningful education.

In the first phase spanning 7 weeks, we worked together on modules related to understanding self and our community. The modules were

- on building trust and dialogue between us as a group;
- on co-creating the purpose and objectives of the program;
- on identifying the various identities (personal and social) we hold and reflecting on how those identities influence their life experiences and how those identities impact the ways others perceive them;
- on understanding their self -- values, emotions and strengths -- and learning about emotional tools that strengthen their agency and resilience;
- on understanding about their adivasi community, the mainstream community and how they relate and differ;
- on learning about the history of the social movement here and of institutions;
- on identifying and articulating the issues facing the community today and the kind of leadership required; and
- creating and articulating the way forward for themselves and their community.

With these learnings and experiences, we are now building the phase 2 of the program where we will be exploring themes in education and how education has a role to play in the issues being faced by the community and the quest for social justice.

In the pictures: The group learning about their communities histories by listening to the elders; the group diving deep into their life to understand who they are; learning about their past and exploring their present, to frame a future path for themselves; group working towards framing their norms and goals and breaking the ice.

Scholarships towards Higher Education

High school and colleges opened up from September this year. Towards enabling and motivating high-school Adivasi children to return back to schools and pursue their higher education, scholarships were provided to 26 students from grade 9 till college education. These scholarships help students become self-reliant

Resource Centre

We are supporting the community facilitators by sharing video resources on various activities. You can find them [here](#). The purpose of these resources is to support the facilitators in their thinking and ideation of activities, which in turn gives them confidence to teach and share with the children.

We have also added videos on Kaathadi covering the concepts in Integers and also on the

importance of social distancing. As it was difficult to browse and find the right Kaathadi videos on YouTube, we requested Nirmal Kapanee, as a volunteer, to create a Mobile Learning App for easy access of Kaathadi YouTube channel videos. We believe the application will be helpful for teachers and students as the content is organized topic wise. Please find below the link to the application on Google Store [here](#).

We want to thank you all for being part of our journey. It is always difficult to say how much it helps to know that you are there looking out for us. While we are grateful to a number of institutional supporters, we also have recently come across a number of people, especially young friends, who want to be a part of this process but who can't give large donations. **So we now have a new idea – Giving Circles.**

You can make a contribution once a month or so and be part of our Giving Circle. So far we have ~20 young people who donate regularly. The amount is not important, it's the sharing and joining of hands that makes the difference. With schools reopening in the first week of November, we are preparing our spaces, people and purpose to ensure all children here go back to school. We also dream of meaningful learning spaces for them as they come back to school and access learning after a long gap. You can join us and enable this by supporting us. **If Giving Circles connect with you, do get on a call (+91 8754780597) and we can build this out together.**

Thank you and Take Care.