

# ASPIRE FOUNDATION - ACTIVITY REPORT

## About us

Aspire Foundation is a registered non-profitable organization whose vision is to improve quality of education and access to education for economically backward rural families.

## Target area and people

We work in 40 villages within a 10 km radius of Nilakottai falling in Nilakottai & Batlagundu Blocks, Dindigul District. Farming is the predominant occupation in our target area.

## ACTIVITY REPORT FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2005 - 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2006

Our intervention is in the core area of education. On one hand, we focus on developing supplementary education modules to strengthen students' knowledge and life skills. The children's education programme is part of this initiative.

## CHILDREN'S EDUCATION PROGRAMME

This programme aims to improve the quality of education of school going children from poor rural families to ensure that they are better informed and in a position to take informed decisions about their education and career.

## Who does it benefit?

Since most students tend to drop out of school after Std. 8, our programme targets *students from Std. 9 upwards from economically backward rural families* and studying in Government or aided schools.

While selecting the student, we ensure that both the child and parents are interesting in pursuing the child's education.

16 students were covered in the programme prior to registration.

## Nature of support provided

- 1) Financial assistance for school fees, books & stationery, uniforms and tuition fees
- 2) 3 skill development programmes



3) 1 excursion for students to Nagercoil, Trivandrum & Kanyakumari



Besides the above, 2 students were enrolled in a computer centre for a basic MS Office computer course.

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**This year, (i.e. academic year 2006-'07), 41 students were covered under the programme.**

The main activities conducted during the year are as follows.

#### SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

These programmes were mainly conducted to improve rural students' skills in communication, quantitative ability, analytical thinking & reasoning, managerial skills, etc., which will be useful for them in future. These programmes enable the child to realize his/her strengths & weaknesses and help the child to take an informed decision about his/her education and career.

We conducted 8 skill development programmes this year. Each programme consisted of a mixture of activities from each skill. The broad 7 skills & topics covered were as below:

**Communication** - sessions on listening, public speaking, debate, group discussion & questioning capability were conducted.

**Quantitative ability** - sessions on data interpretation, mathematical puzzles and tangrams were conducted.

**Creativity** - sessions on role play and making advertisements for products were conducted.

**Analytical ability** - sessions on eye for detail, logical reasoning and sequential arrangement were conducted.

**Comprehension** - sessions on reading an article and answering questions there from and concentration exercises were conducted.

**Subject knowledge** - sessions such as quiz, mapping and teaching & presentation were conducted.

**Managerial ability** - sessions on problem solving, team building, decision making and planning & time management were conducted.

Each of the 8 programmes was conducted in 2 batches (for 20 students each) and for each programme, prizes were given to the top 2 performers in each batch.

## Snapshots of skill development programmes



Children involved in a reading comprehension exercise



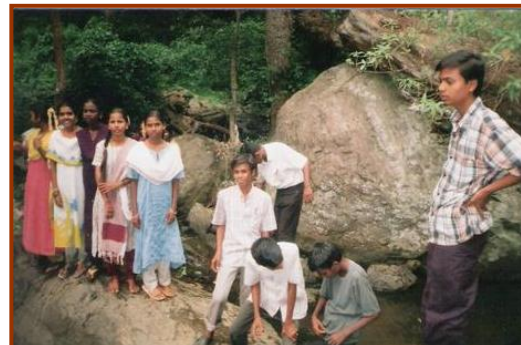
Children enacting an advertisement of their own

## FIELD TRIPS

We took students on field trips to give them an opportunity to relate what they study in school to the world around them. This helped children to learn by observing and exploring. After each trip, the students were asked to submit a report on their experience and learning. They promptly submitted these reports. We took our students for 4 field trips. The locations are:

### Vaigai Dam & Suruli Waterfalls

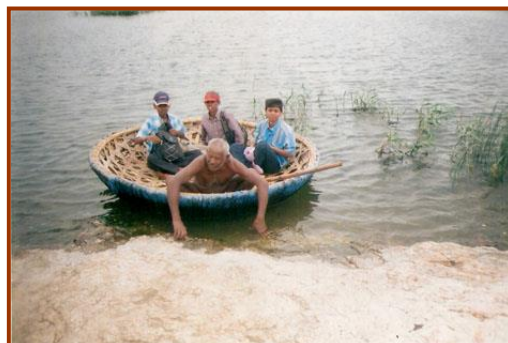
This trip was organized on July 9<sup>th</sup>. Here, an engineer explained the concept of watershed management to the students. They also understood about electricity generation from water.



On the other, we strive to enhance the quality of the existing education system. Our current programmes are as below.

### Aavin Milk Processing Unit, Erode

The field trip to the Aavin dairy unit in Erode on August 12<sup>th</sup> was a new experience of a kind for the children. They were taken on a tour of the entire processing plant and also shown how products such as ghee, butter, milk khoa and milk powder are produced. Later, the children enjoyed a boat ride on the Bhavani river and visited the famous Kooduthurai temple.



### Sholai School, Kodaikanal

The 3<sup>rd</sup> field trip was on Sep. 3<sup>rd</sup> to Sholai School, a residential "alternative" school accredited to the National Open School (NOS) Board, offering education for 3-18 year olds. The school, the organic farm, and the appropriate technology centre together spread over 100 acres. Biogas plants, solar electric panels, micro hydro electric plants & a wind generator generate electricity for the school. Other features are rainwater harvesting and several compost pits that convert human & animal waste into manure. The school students themselves took our students on a tour of the school and explained the various features and processes.



### Tuticorin Harbour

The 4<sup>th</sup> and final field visit for the year was to the Tuticorin Harbour on Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>. Here, a ship master explained the operations carried out in the harbour, the types of cargo handled and took the students on a tour of the harbour. They were also taken on a ride atop a pilot boat and the entire technical mechanisms of the boat were explained in detail.



### Health programmes

Besides, a **first aid awareness programme** was organized in collaboration with St. John's Ambulance, Dindigul on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> 2006 and a **general health programme** was organized with the help of TN Voluntary Health Association in January 2007. Both these programmes were very useful for the students.



Apart from the above programmes, the students were taken on a **2-day excursion to Cochin and Palakkad** during the Pongal holidays in January. The main places seen were as below.

- Kumarakom
- Marine Drive
- Cherai Beach
- Mattanchery Palace
- Adirampally Waterfall
- Malampuzha Garden & Dam
- Palakkad Fort

#### **Other activities**

- **Financial assistance** for school fees, tuition fees, books, stationery and uniform for all 41 students
- **Basic computer operations** were taught free of cost for 10 students.
- **2 parents' meetings** were conducted - one in June and the other in October, to keep parents informed of their children's attendance, progress and performance in school and in our programmes.
- **Prizes were distributed** to the overall top 2 performers of the previous academic year, i.e. ending April 2006, based on academic performance, regularity in reporting, attendance & performance in skill development programmes and field trips. These children were given an opportunity to share their experience and motivate other students and parents during the parents' meeting.

#### **Funding**

The above children's education programme is funded entirely by individuals who are interested in contributing to quality education.

#### **OTHER PROGRAMMES**

Besides running our own supplementary educational programme, we also strive to enhance the quality of the existing education system. In this connection, we obtained the following 2 projects from an NGO called AID India, based in Chennai. Both financial and technical support for these programmes is being given by AID India.

## 1) READING PROGRAMME

This programme aims to improve Tamil reading among primary school students in Government and aided schools. The module is activity – based and has attracted the interest of teachers and children.



This starts with an evaluation of children's reading levels and contains activities to help them improve their reading fluency. The aim of the programme is to ensure that all children are able to read Tamil fluently.

From December 2006 to March 2007, reading classes were conducted in 5 villages and 5 schools, details of which are under.

### List of villages where reading class was conducted and number of students benefited

1. Seethapuram - 32
2. Noothulapuram - 23
3. Maniyakkaranpatti- 27
4. Kulathupatti - 23
5. Kongarkulam - 27

### List of schools where reading class was conducted and number of students benefited

1. Panchayat Union Primary School, Kulathupatti - 20
2. Igbalia Middle School, Batlagundu - 29
3. Panchayat Union Primary School, Sevugampatti - 42
4. Panchayat Union Primary School, Muthalapuram - 60
5. Panchayat Union Primary School, Chinnamanaickenkottai - 60

## 2) VILLAGE LIBRARIES

In this programme, every village is given a bag of about 80-100 books. Children and sometimes even adults borrow these books and read the simple interesting stories. The idea is to develop & encourage the reading habit among rural children.

We have been running village libraries in 20 villages this year. Each library has an average strength of 30 students who borrow books regularly. Besides reading, other activities and games are also taught to the students.