

Site Visit to Timkatu Collective – Chilrenss Resource Center

Date : Nov 25th 2011

Visited by : Asha Bangalore volunteers – Ajay Gupta and Thushar Kumar

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Ajay, his family (sis and dad) and myself visited **Timbaktu** Collective on the weekend of Nov 25, 2011. It was the first visit for each of us and a very good experience. Ajay and I needed to plan for the Team Asha visit on Dec 10-11 and all of us wanted to soak in **Timbaktu** as much as we could. Specifically, we wanted to cover Prakruti Badi, the school that Asha Bangalore supports.

We were hosted by Vaneeta who's recently moved in to **Timbaktu** to take classes and train the teachers amongst other things. She put us up in very nicely designed, simple and comfortable guest rooms. The rooms can accommodate a larger team and there are other such rooms too. Accommodation is not a concern. Likewise, food is also very tasty and simple and can easily scale to higher demand. Vaneeta now additionally handles the Support A Child (SAC) program from Prakruti Badi's end

We visited the school and interacted with the kids. They are a happy lot and do not shy away from visitors, which is a very good thing. **Timbaktu** in that sense affords the students a lot of interaction with a diverse set of people from various countries. These visitors more often than not organize workshops for the kids in their area of specialty. The school follows a strict schedule and for the residential kids, it continues post school. Prakruti Badi has a good library of its own. There is regular exchange of books from the nearby Children's Resource Centre (CRC) which hosts a more equipped library. There is a good playground and the school has recently upgraded its sports equipment. Kids are actively involved in gardening and tend to plants allotted individually/in groups.

We also visited **Timbaktu** CRC and saw the calendars. They have come out very well. We also saw some bags that the girls had made. I for one was very impressed with the aesthetic quality and the finish. CRC library operates as a public library and people from the village utilize it proactively. Several girls have undergone training in crafts and stitching at CRC.

We met Babloo and Mary, the couple who started **Timbaktu** and spent some time with them at their house and over lunch. Ajay discussed with Babloo the possibility of **Timbaktu** benefiting from corporate programmes that fund social entrepreneurship ventures (eg. Mahindra).

We met Dinesh who's been with **Timbaktu** for long and has nurtured **Timbaktu's** organic farming initiative from the start. The major products are groundnuts and different types of millets. Currently, the demand is more than **Timbaktu's** capacity to

produce and so there's potential to scale it up. Dinesh has now set up his own venture in organic farming. He will continue to be associated with **Timbaktu** organic. We visited the marketing office and factory. We saw the processing and packaging of different products and bought some samples too. The factory is professionally run and there is a clear process for all activities.

We also met Mani who's employed at **Timbaktu** and takes care of finances amongst many other things.

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