

FORWORD

[A status Report- February-October 2009]

February 7th 2009: Children & Political empowerment:

On 7th and 14th of February, children and political empowerment seminars were conducted in two clusters 1.Madhuranthagam Taluk 2.Tambaram Taluk. Today's context of political scenario, the making and running of political partners in India today, the politics of common mass and the alternative way of political empowerment were discussed with children were motivated to think, on these areas. The spontaneous response of the children was amazing.

Arulmani from Pulikoradu opined that he would like to study and become an IAS officer, and will ensure good governance to the common mass of his area.

Thus, through such monthly cluster level sensitizing programs, we try to motivate the deprived children to dream and then to work for it and to pursue it.

March 12th 2009: Supporting 5 children from Thandarai Pettai in Madhurantagam Taluk who to continue their education

The economical crisis in India is making and marking its deep wound in the life of the already broken communities, who are at the bottom of the social ladder. Children from the rural areas are thrown out of schooling, since their parents are unable to pay school fee. Children from Thandarai pettai and Thandarai pudhuchery are badly affected by this.

In our findings, it was found out that many of our Asha class children are studying in a private school named R.C.School, since there is no other Government run schools. Thandarai is situated in the interior part, cut off from near Mel Maruvathur, in Madhuranthagam Taluk, in Kancheepuram District. They are charging a yearly fee that comes to around Rs.1000/- as well as charges for uniform dress.

Since the parents have lost their employment opportunities due to loss of agricultural lands. They are pushed to more and more poverty. In this context their priority is to earn for survival and not otherwise. Hence the children, who are thrown out of schools, are stopped by the parents from continuing their education.

Thanks to Asha grant, FORWORD has come to help thro Asha, FORWORD has supported 5 children, among them one is a semi orphan and one boy's both parents are badly handicapped. Overall children have shown very good development in their studies and are showing good academic results.

March 13th: Progress reports of 4 children

P.Kasthuri.. VIII Standard R.C. Higher Secondary School, Thandalam.
Kotteeswari VII standard R.C. Higher Secondary School, Thandalam
Sharmila VI standard R.C. Higher Secondary School, Thandalam
S.Pushpa Latha VI standard, R.C. Higher Secondary School, Thandalam.

August 15th 2009: Independence Day celebrations

It was a day of collective joyful celebration for the children of the neglected areas, where FORWARD has put up quality education evening centers, with the support of Asha for Education, U-Florida Chapter.

Though, the quality education evening centers are running in 13 deserving areas in kancheepuram District and though in all the centers, the celebration was taken up, only in three clusters comprising eight centers, the Organization could personally participate, because of the time constraints.

Programs in Details of 15.08.2009:

At 8:00a.m. Children from kannadapalayam center, Pulikoradu crusher center and the Pulikoradu hill center assembled on the main road of Pulikoradu (a quarry area where the migrated community live), where a flag hoisting was arranged by the woman sangam & Asha children. The Director of FORWARD, M.Shiamala Baby hoisted the flag, with the help of the women members of pulikoradu, most of them, the parents of the children. The flag hoisting was celebrated with distribution of sweets and flowers.

It was followed by the cultural events of the children of these three centers. There were different varieties of dances, dramas, speeches and singing by the children. The community enjoyed the talents displayed by their wards. They encouraged their children and enjoyed the variety-programmes.

Ms.Arul Selvi and Ms.Nirupa, the Teach India Volunteers promoted by Times of India, actively participated in these celebrations and presented the children with sweets and Volunteer Suma contributed 150 pens to the children. The Teach India Volunteers were routed through CIOSA of MAFOI Foundation, in Chennai.

The HR department of ARCHEAN group of companies namely Mr.Saravanan, Ms.Nandhini, and Mr. Mohan participated in the celebration of the deprived children and they made the children happy with distribution of Chocolates and study materials, to the children.

The cultural team, organized by FORWARD under the leadership of Mr.Karthick, the Education Facilitator of FORWARD, performed a street theatre play named “ Unity in Diversity”. The actors of the theatre, performed in a beautiful way the different social issues faced by the deprived communities and gave away the message to the overcome differences and

to buildup a strong united India. It was fondly appreciated by the children as well as by the community members of Pulikoradu.

In the evening, a cluster level Independence Day Celebration was conducted in Thandarai, where children from Thandalam, Thandarai Pudhucheri and the two centers of Thandarai participated. Children displayed their talents in folk arts like Karagam, Bharatha Natiyam and in record dances. A role play, high lighting the need for remedial teaching centers, appreciating the services of FORWARD, in the field of education and thanking the support of Asha for education was staged by the children.

Parents and the general community participated in the celebration. They were happy over the performance of their wards. It was informed that Koteeswari, a Child in 7th standard had come first in academic efficiency in her class. She was appreciated for her efforts. She is one among the scholarship students, supported by Asha for quality education, U-Florida Project. This girl is a motherless and she is cared and loved by the FORWARD family. The FORWARD cultural team staged the street play and made the children and community happy. In the end children were presented with study materials and chocolates. Children were empowered through exhibition of their hidden talents, team activity and collective enjoyment.

At 7:00p.m. in the late evening, we participated in the independence Day Celebration programmes organized by the education center in Elappakkam. The children in Elapakkam, exhibited their multi talents in recitation of English poems, speeches on national leaders and group dancing. There also, in the end, the children were presented with study materials and sweets.

On this 63rd Independence Day, the Team of FORWARD covered around 275 kilometers of distance, touching the lives of round 250 deprived children, who live either on the quarry areas, in an extreme unhygienic way or in the extreme remote rural areas which are not accessible to normal public transportation.

The once drooped flowers blossomed fresh through the collective efforts, monitored by FORWARD; in the field of quality education yes the deprived children also enjoyed their right to joy, relaxation and nurture talents.

Sept 23rd 2009: A short Report on “Youth in India: Situation needs study”.

On 23.09.2009; the International institute for population sciences (IIPS) Mumbai, along with population council, Delhi, conducted an one day seminar on the topic “Youth in India: situation and needs study”. The Director of FORWARD was invited to participate and contribute in it. As such the Director, along with the programme co-coordinator participated in it.

This seminar was well attended by around 100 participants, who represented Social Action groups, child rights & human rights networks, Government officials, Journalists and medical professionals.

The discussions went around four major youth-related topics namely:

1. Education and transition of work among youth in Tamil Nadu.
2. Sexuality education matters: Experiences of youth in Tamil Nadu
3. Youth participation in civil society and political life in Tamil Nadu
4. Violence within marriage among young people in Tamil Nadu.

After the Panel presentations on the given topics, heated and healthy discussions took place on different areas of youth activities. While driving her point, the Director of FORWARD, commented on the status of youth in today's context in India. She pointed out the growing restlessness among youth, in this transition period from value-based life style to money or commodity-based lifestyle and said lack of guidance and shallowness in moral life contribute to the present deteriorating status of the youth. She added that value-based lifestyle can alone save the youth from depressions and suicides among youth especially among educated youths.

Thiru V.K.Subburaj, I.A.S., Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of Tamil Nadu.

KG Santhya, Population Council, New Delhi.

Rajib Acharya, Population Council, New Delhi, spoke on the occasion. In the afternoon, during the panel presentation;

Dr.Subramaniam, RUWSEC

Dr.Jasmine Prasad, CMC Vellore

Dr.Rani Mohanraj, Samarth presented their papers which was followed by open discussion.

This Seminar highlighted the importance of youth, as the future of any nation depends upon youth force. It alerted the participants to renew their commitment to work for the reconstruction of a dignified-youth force in India and to save it from human right violations, such as lack of educational opportunities, empowerment opportunities, child-marriage, child-abuse and child disempowerment.

October 19th 2009: Diwali Celebrations at the Elappakkam Center:

On 19.10.2009, the quality education children of Elappakkam Center, celebrated Diwali as a communityDay, in their own way. Their parents and other members of the community of that locality were invited as participants. There are 21 children from 4th to 10th Std in this center.

Children performed cultural programmes, VigneshVIII standard spoke on Human Rights of women and Rakesh spoke on Shri.Kamaraj, the leader who introduced Mid Day Meals in schools and brought up electricity to Dalit houses. They showed excellent talents in oratory skill.

Gayathri VIIIth , Veeramani VIII danced for folk songs in a superb way. Children were so enthusiastic and displayed varied talents in arts. Role-plays, theme songs, traditional songs of Dalits expressing their simple life and its struggles were the high lights of the celebration.

To quote Gayathri, "I am happy that my talent is recognized and appreciated. After coming to this evening center, I am concentrating on my studies very much. I come first in my

class and I am selected for the talent examination, to be conducted by our school. I thank Asha for education for my academic as well as otherwise efficiency in my class”.

Amutha, mother of Vignesh is a poor agricultural coolie. She was so excited to see the talent of her son and said openly, in the feed back”, I am an illiterate Dalit woman. I know only about weeding, planting and other related agricultural activities. Literacy is too far away from me. But today I am so proud to hear my son speaking in Tamil as well as in English with such fluency. This is the first time, I am watching my son’s performance I think, the credit goes to Asha quality education center and I thank FORWARD, for having worked out for this great transformation of our children in education and in behavior”.

The programme started at 6:30p.m. and went up to 9:00p.m. At the end, children were gifted with mementoes. Gomathy the Education Teacher of this center thanked the community for their participation and thanked the children for their enthusiastic performance and participation.

October 24th: Cluster-level program for Asha children from Tambaram.- (Kannadapalayam, Pulikoradu & Jothi Nagar).

As part of the year-activity plan, a cluster level relaxation cum education programme was conducted for the Asha children of Tambaram cluster.

- Personality building.
- Enabling the individual center to become part of the main stream of Asha family.
- Create a platform for children to learn mutually.
- To be exposed to children of other centers of Asha family.
- Ensuring the children’s right to relax and for gaining extra-knowledge.

In order to achieve the above objectives, four kinds of programmes were conducted.

- I. Self-introduction.
- II. Finding one’s partner and to know about her/him deeply.
- III. Team drawing.
- IV. Display of life-promoting cultural talents.