

BALA LAKSHYA JYOTHI

(Lighting up Children's future)

Issue:17

Quarterly Newsletter from RELIEF FOUNDATION

March, 2019

CONTENTS

Message from Chairperson	1	How can you support us	11
RF News	2	Contact us	12

A Message from the Chairperson

Dear friends and well-wishers of Relief Foundation,

Greetings!

We are happy to share the updates of the last quarter. The challenges we face seem less daunting when we see happy children coming into and leaving our centres every day. Parents in both centres are now beginning to see our steadfastness of approach favouring the child and are willing to change and learn good parenting practices.

Only when the parent collaborates with the child's education, is there an osmotic transfer of respectful culture into the home and thereby into the community. Children are to be taken seriously. People in the villages are now beginning to revisit their childhood in these classrooms and seeking a certain healing and personal progress by attending several of our sessions.

The path of our mission is meandering, yet the goal is certain. We are confident of reaching it with the good wishes of supporters like you. We are happy to welcome you to visit our projects and get to meet our team and the communities in person, to get first-hand experience of our work and its impact.

Wishing you enjoyable reading while awaiting your feedback on this issue.

Best wishes till we meet next!

Vidya Shankar,
Chairperson

RF News

Updates from *CASCADE* Montessori
Rural Resource Centres

Narsingapuram Centre

**Geography Sessions in
Gummidipoondi Region**

Update on construction

As we reported earlier, we are building our own centre in Narasingapuram village of Gummidipoondi Taluk. The construction is expected to complete by April 2019. We are planning to open the new facility for children and the community starting next academic year onwards. We are in the process of identifying a person to get trained in Montessori philosophy to work with us. As the scope is expanding, we are looking out for a person to assist Mr.Paranthaman in this area. If you know anyone who is interested to work in villages, please refer him/her to us by writing to mjkrishnan76@gmail.com

Elavur School

Geography sessions were conducted in Elavur Government School for middle level students in the months of November, December and January

2019. Two separate sessions were held. Totally, more than 60 students got benefitted by these sessions. Special materials were utilized for inducing the interest of the students. Each session lasted for 40 minutes. While our staff member Mr.Prasanna Bharathi conducted sessions for 7th std. children, Mr.Paranthaman conducted for 6th std. children.



Methipalayam

Besides Elavur School, we have started the Geography sessions in another Government school in

Methipalayam village. We have been taking sessions for middle level students for the last 4 months. Totally, more than 25 students participated in these sessions and greatly benefitted from them. Each session lasted for 45 minutes. Mr.PrasannaBharathi conducted these sessions.



Interns' visit

The two Loyola College students, who are undergoing internship with us, visited our Gummidipoondi centre and took stock of the material in our Narasingapuram Centre. They

conducted a survey in the nearby villages to ascertain the details of school going children. Parents were very cooperative.

Jamunamarathur Centre

Toddler/Casa Update

The three months from November to January 2019 saw the number of children in the centre rising to 15 with two of them in the toddler age. In the month of December, the half-yearly reports of the children were written and shared with parents in the month of January 2019. Mr. Mani, the CASA adult, spent close to 30 minutes per parent discussing the progress of children. The interest with which parents were willing to discuss the report was a pleasant learning experience for not only the classroom adult but also to the entire organization. Relief Foundation has always recommended and supported parents' participation in their children's education. When we saw it happening in our own centers, it certainly became and will continue to be an inspiration for us to take this initiative forward in many other villages.



In the classroom, it was interesting to note that the children had slowly weaned away from the visiting adult (who was permanently there before), Mr.Hari found that children were happy to work and talk with the primary adult Mr. Mani. Another observation made was that when a child, who wanted to work with some peers, was not welcomed by them, she took it upon herself to keep herself

busy right through the day. The development of will in the children had taken shape in the right direction was what we could glean from these two important observations.



The children also celebrated Republic day with the visiting elementary and adolescent group from Chennai along with Mr.Murali and Mr.Hari. The flag was hoisted and the flag song was sung by the visiting children. Suraj (name changed), one of the visiting students, gave a small talk about the history of Republic Day and the function wound up with the National Anthem and peanut jaggery balls were distributed to all the people.



The older children saw one of their peers' smooth moving out and joining a nearby school in 1st grade. This inspired them to look out for a similar experience themselves. There were immediate demands from the next set of older children to know when they would be moving out and when they would be taken to a school visit.

Outreach Sessions:

The cement rings, trash bags for paper/plastics and cloth bags for use were distributed to 10 willing households in all in the month of December. As a follow up, we also got to see if the households were using the rings for the meant purpose in January 2019 by making home visits.

The children from the city CASCADE centre visited Jamunamarathur in the months of November and January along with Mr.Murali Krishnan. They

had more sessions with our agriculture consultant, Mr.Viswanathan. They initiated terrace gardening at the Centre by sowing some vegetable seeds. During both the visits, the children were involved in weeding. They also got a chance to clean up the compost pit and filling it with farm waste.

Mr.Prasanna Barathi continued his monthly visits to Jamunamarathur and had been successful in forming an interested group of parents in a village near Athipattu. The young parents there were welcoming and coordinated to have had 3 meetings over this quarter.

Parents' sessions

There were four parent meetings held during these three months for the Toddler/Casa parents. Two were conducted by Mr.Murali and one each by Mr.Hari and Mr.Mani. The topics that were covered include - How and what to observe in a .Montessori classroom, Development of Movement. The other two sessions were general Question and Answer sessions that saw the parents coming out with a

variety of questions that were all answered satisfactorily. All the three meetings had an average attendance.

Parents - Teachers Association (PTA) Meeting - Perungattur Government Model School

This school used to conduct PTA Meetings at regular intervals. In that respect, they invited a representative from our Organization as a Chief Guest to deliver a speech for January 2019 meeting. Our staff member Mr.PrasannaBharthi participated as a Chief Guest and delivered a speech on "The Art of Understanding Children". This speech lasted for 45 minutes and was appreciated by the participants. It was very useful and a new experience for them. Totally 230 parents and 300 students participated. The school bought our children's literature for their library.



Regular Parents' Meetings in Athipattu village

We have been conducting Parents' Meeting continuously for the last 4 months in Athipattu village of Javvathu hills. There were around 15 regular participants for these meetings. We were able to successfully conduct these meetings in the months of November, December (2018) and January (2019). Our staff member Mr.PrasannaBharathi coordinates these meetings with the help of our

other staff members
Mr.Mani&Mr.Viswanathan.

Special Montessori translated articles and newly created materials were used for these meetings. Participants were very attentive and interacted well. They felt that these meetings were informative and were useful for them.



Geography session

Since October 2018, we have been conducting Geography sessions in Javathu hills region. Initially, we started this activity in Jamunamarathur Government Forest Middle School. Later, we expanded

this initiative gradually to some other schools as well.

Jamunamarathur

In Jamunamarathur Forest Middle School, we conducted 2 separate Geography sessions. Each session lasted for 45 minutes and more than 50 students benefitted from those sessions. A notable point about those sessions was that the Assistant Head-Master of this school also attended the sessions eagerly with the students.



Veerappanur

It is a nearby village of Jamunamarathur and has Forest Middle School. In this school, we conducted 2 separate sessions for middle level students. Each session lasted for about 40 minutes and more than 35 students derived benefits from these sessions. Special

materials were applied for these sessions.



Perungattur Model School

We wanted to find out a new school to expand our mission in spreading Geographical awareness in the society. As a result of this, we started our new Geography sessions at Perungattur Government Model Higher Secondary School for middle level students. More than 75 students participated in this grand initial session in the School auditorium.

Students enjoyed this session a lot and interacted with us post the session as well. School Administration was very supportive on this. This initial session lasted for 60 minutes.

All Geography Sessions at Javvathu hills region are regularly conducted by our staff member Mr.Prasanna Bharathi.

Mr. Prasanna Bharathi's experience:

"In every school when children see me, they come running towards me expressing their happiness. After I complete my session, they ask me when I would come back. Meanwhile, they express their interests in geography differently. Few children show a lot of interest when we show pictures. While there are many children who show extreme interest in learning irrespective of whether or not we showed them pictures or videos. On the whole, children look forward to our sessions every month. I am extremely happy that we are able to take geography education to financially underprivileged children in interior parts. I think it is our victory."



Materials and Training:

The Function Games materials and more reading practice materials were added during this quarter. There was a special set of cards meant for highlighting the combination of Tamil letters that was proposed and added by Mr. Mani.

Two more sessions were held for the ambassadors (the children's assistant and a parent) by Mr. Hari during this quarter. The topics covered during these sessions include the Human Tendencies and Planes of Development. One of them took the effort to observe our centre children exhibiting some of the tendencies discussed. It was an awakening for her that she saw what was being discussed.

Agricultural Update:

This quarter coinciding with a dry season, the plant maintenance was given the highest priority. Weeding and mulching of fallen leaves were the primary tasks undertaken. The plants have showed a slight increase in height.'

The honey box was flourishing with an additional box added to the top. Harvest of the same is not done, as the dry season extended on the hills and we didn't want to damage the hive, which fed the bees.

Case Study:

Ramesh (name changed)
5 years 6 months
Male, Jamunamaruthur

Ramesh is the first child who completed our Casa classroom cycle of 3 years. We got an opportunity to visit his classroom at the new school he had enrolled into. The child was very attentive in class, but seemed a bit scared of being reprimanded when answering in class. He was active and when the period shifted to Mathematics he showed very active interest.

We also got a chance to interact with both his class teacher and Math teacher. They were both of the opinion that though he joined them mid- year in October, he was comfortable with the curriculum and

settled in the class. He was academically comfortable as well.

Other Updates

Geography Course

We successfully completed conducting the "Developing the Geographer's Eye" course in association with 'The Institute of Geographical Studies - Bangalore'. Course completion certificates were distributed to the participants in December 2018.



How you can support us?

- ❖ Sponsor a family - towards cost of educating, mentoring a family with children attending our Montessori Rural Resource centres in one of our rural centres - Rs. 20000/- per year
- ❖ Sponsor a child in our evening classes in rural areas @ Rs.10,000/- per year. These are children who finish 3 years of primary Montessori classes in our centres in the morning and join other schools to continue education. They use the facility in the evening and continue to receive support for their elementary education.
- ❖ Sponsor education - towards cost of supporting a child's education, studying in a school, till the age of economic independence identified by Relief Foundation, after a due diligence screening process. Rs. 6000/- per year per child including educational resources, home library, home visits and counseling sessions for families for responsible living and linking them to various Government schemes where applicable.
- ❖ Sponsor an awareness program - towards creating awareness programs in our centres for the community, we require material as well as human resource support. To conduct the following programs in our centres, per session the costs including all the expenses to cover about 30 families would be Rs. 20,000. Resource persons and materials, besides flyers would be used for these programs
 - Alcoholism
 - Importance of education
 - Girl child protection
 - Hygiene and healthcare
 - Healthy living medicine free
 - Self-employment
 - Career options for youth

Note: All donations made to Relief Foundation are exempted under Sec. 80G of the Income Tax Act of India.

Contact us

Relief Foundation,
E153, 7th Cross Street, Besant Nagar,
(Next to Besant Nagar Post Office)
Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600090, India
Tel: 044-2491 7644

Email:

relieffoundationindia@gmail.com **Website:**

www.reliefoundation.in

