

Educational Developments in Mullaithivu District - After School Tutorials

Background

The families in Mullaithivu district are still living in very difficult economic conditions since the war ended in 2009. There are more than 2000 GCE O/L and 800 A/L students in this district and these students are not able to complement their weak school learning with after school tutorials at private tuition centres. As most of the teachers are from Jaffna and are therefore commuting from there, the teachers are not able to complete the syllabuses on time for their examinations. These children have suffered enormous hardship during the war and many have lost parents, siblings, relatives or friends and are still struggling with war related memories and live under difficult economic situation for their daily bread and butter. Under these circumstances, and without extra help, they can't be successful in their education.

The Mullaithivu District Educational Development Trust fund (MDEDTF) headed by Mr Vethanayagan, GA of Mullaithivu, has therefore proposed that after-school tutorials could be conducted, free of charge, for these disadvantaged students. When Assist RR trustees visited Mullaithivu in March 2013, they were asked by MDEDTF whether Assist RR could support "After School Tutorials" to improve English, Science and Maths to GCE O/L & A/L students in Mullaithivu District. Assist RR trustees considered this request and agreed to support this initiative, as this is an important step towards enhancing the future employment prospect of the young generation of this district. Statistics based on 2011 student numbers of GCE A/L in Mullaithivu district and their pass rates are given below.

Table 1: G.C.E (A/L) STUDENT NUMBERS & RESULTS ANALYSIS AS At 31.12.2011

Stream	Educational Zone Mullaithivu			Educational Zone Thunukkai		
	No.Sat	No.Passed	%	No.Sat	No.Passed	%
Maths	47	23	49	5	3	33.3
Science	84	40	48	10	2	0
Commerce	162	113	70	13	5	55.6
Arts	352	252	72	148	122	
Total	645	428	66	176	132	88.9

Source:-Zonal Director of Education Office, Mullaithivu, Thunukkai

A significant number of students are dropping out after sitting their O/L examinations especially, in Thunukkai zone, which includes most of the deprived areas in this district. There are only 84 students learning A/L science subjects compared to 1710 students in O/L learning science. This obviously indicates the depth of the problem. We need to provide urgent necessary steps to resolve the issues to transform the situations to the benefit of the students.

Assist RR believes that it could try and resolve this by encouraging them to follow A/L science subjects with the provision of free after school tuition. Some mothers did tell Assist RR that their children opted to do arts/commerce subjects in GCE A/L because of their inability to pay for private tuition. They believe that these after School tuition classes would give them a better chance of gaining admissions to Universities. The free tuition classes are conducted with the guidance of Mr Sivasithamparam and Mr Gunaseelan, retired principals of Karaveddy J/Vigneswara College and Point Pedro J/Hartley College and teachers from Jaffna and Mullaithivu districts with the requisite skills to support 2176 GCE O/L & 408 A/L students.

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It was decided by MDEDTF that initially the after school tuitions would be conducted in eight centres in Mullaithivu zone and another ten centres in Thunukkai zone for GCE O/L students and in two centres in Mullaithivu zone and another two centres in Thunukkai zone for A/L students. Recently, Assist RR decided to support A/L art & commerce subjects in some of the remote schools in Thunukkai zone, as these remote schools are difficult to reach since there is no public transport to these areas at present.

Funding Requirements

This programme supported by Assist RR has been in existence since June 2013, benefitting 2584 students at present as given in Table 2 but this number will increase in the future. Serendip Children's Home, after hearing about this initiative, agreed to fund Rs 100,000 for the first 5 months last year. Serendip has now stopped funding since the beginning of this year. However, further to a meeting with **Tamil Forum Malaysia** (TFM) in January this year, TFM has agreed to fund 50% of the cost of this programme. Assist RR endeavour to fund the other 50% through **Hartley College Past Pupils' Association of NSW, Australia's** contribution of Rs 25,600 per month for one year, our existing Standing Order donations and Money Box collections from shops in the UK. However, Assist RR does not raise sufficient funds through above means to continue this worthwhile project. This is a regular commitment and we urgently seek funds so that we keep supporting these war affected needy students.

Table 2: Number of students participating in the After School Tuitions and the costs

	Class	No. of Centres	No of Teachers Involved	No. of Students	Expected Cost per month	Expected Cost per year
Mullaithivu Zone	A/L	2	8	324	32,000	384,000
	O/L	8	23	466	92,000	1,104,000
Thunukkai Zone	A/L	2	8	84	32,000	384,000
	O/L	10	46	1710	184,000	2,208,000
District Total	A/L	4	4	408	64,000	768,000
	O/L	18	16	2176	276,000	3,312,000
Total		22	105	2584	Rs 340,000	Rs 4,080,000
	Cost of this programme per student				Rs 132	Rs 1584

The Progress

Assist RR made visits to some schools in Mullaithivu district on 6th Nov 2013 to inspect "After school tuition" classes supported by Assist RR and Serendip Children's Home. This included visits to Oddusuddan MV, Puthukudiyiruppu Central College, Mulliyawalai Vidyananda College and Iyankulam GTM School.

Assist RR spoke to the students and teachers about this initiative and discussed the need for this initiative. Majority of the students confirmed that they do not attend any other private lessons and that they depend on these tuition classes to improve their chances of enhancing

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their lives. The teachers were also glad that they were participating in this initiative and helping the students.

Assist RR also met some of the principals and teachers in the presence of the GA, Mr Vethanayagan, on 16 Jan 2014 and discussed the progress and issues faced by them. The teachers confirmed that they see improvements in students' achievements and that they expect better results in this year's O/L & A/L exams. They also expect more A/L science students next year due to availability of this scheme. Assist RR therefore believes that there is a need to continue this programme. Assist RR is very enthusiastic in our support of these programs and we strongly believe this will transform the lives of these students and bring hope and better future to them and their families.



After School Tuition" classes at PTK Central College & Oddusuddan MV

Evaluation Tests in March 2014

As part of this programme, Assist RR recently requested an evaluation process, assisted by Mr Sivasithamparam, and Mr Gunalseelan. This process, which was completely independent, was carried out in March 2014 and the results of Mullaithivu zone are given in Table 3. Assist RR still awaiting the results of Thunukkai Zone. These results from Mullaithivu Zone, compared to the results achieved in 2011 (Table 1), indicate that there is a significant improvement in the pass rates of combined maths (39% increase). Overall, the pass rates have gone up by 18% compared to 2011. Although the results are very encouraging, they show that the students need more help and support especially in Chemistry and Physics.

Funding Requirements for extra weekend lessons

Sivanarulillam had already agreed with the GA to do monthly weekend seminars/crash courses for A/L students, which are being organised by the same ex principals from Jaffna using teachers from Jaffna. Assist RR believe that the frequency of these weekend support should be increased and propose that weekend support should be provided every two weeks. Assist RR believe that with a little bit of more assistance, the students taking A/Ls this year would do a lot better than previous years in Mullaithivu district. This means that Assist RR is seeking around Rs 80,000 per month to fund these weekend lessons. Any individuals or organisations interested in participating in this programme, please contact Assist RR.

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Table 3: Results of the Evaluation Tests completed in March 2014 in Mullaithivu Zone

Subject	No. Of Students Participated	No. Of Students Passed		No. Of Students achieving >75	
Combined Maths	42	37	88%	5	12%
Biology	56	37	66%	13	23%
Chemistry	85	36	42%	2	2%
Physics	72	48	67%	1	1%
Total	255	158	62%	21	8%

Other Educational Projects

Solar Powered Lamps for students

There are many villages in this district still without any electricity, and the students are struggling to learn using kerosene lamps. This can be resolved by providing solar powered lamps, which would also save money on kerosene. Assist RR therefore believes that there is a need to provide solar powered lamps to at least A/L students at a cost of Rs 1150 per lamp. Following Assist RR's appeal, **Anbaalayam and Tamil Engineers Foundation**, both from Australia have provided funds to import 450 lamps from China. These lamps have arrived in Colombo and will be distributed to needy A/L students in remote areas of Thunukkai and villagers in Mullivaikal in April 2014. If we can find more funds, we can supply more solar powered lamps to other students in these remote villages. It costs only £6 per lamp.

GCE A/L Crash Courses in Mullaitivu

Assist RR, in partnership with Serendip Children's Home, sponsored a two-day crash course for GCE Advanced Level (A/L) students of Mullaithivu district to assist them with their A/L exams in August 2013. Teachers from Jaffna district conducted these courses on 10th & 11th July 2013 in Mullaithivu. These courses were organised by MDEDTF, who provided necessary logistics and transport to students from Thunukkai.



The crash course in Mullaithivu in Aug 2013