

Name	Meena R Madurai Sevashram Girls Home		Sponsor		
Institution	Sethu Institute of Technology				
Location	Kariyapatti, Virudhunagar		Accommodation	Home	
Course	Bachelor of Electronic Communications Engineering		4 years		
Start	01 July 2013	End	30 June 2017	Year	4



Our Apprentices continue to study their syllabus of theoretical and practical subjects into their fourth year, living in campus hostels, local digs or for some travelling daily from their or a relative's home. Their Superintendent continues to maintain regular contact, monitoring progress, welfare and attendance and liaising with faculty members. In this final year most courses set projects for students to undertake in small groups. For our Apprentices, project expenses are covered by additional sponsorship payments. Lastly come final exams and most colleges host campus interviews, leading to work experience and substantive employment.

Meena continues to perform consistently well on her course, achieving overall results for the first six semesters of 8.0, 8.0, 8.1, 7.98, 8.23 and 8.01 respectively. 7th semester exams are over but the results are not yet released; informally she's looking at 8.9 for theory and 7.8 for practical.

Her subjects for 8th semester are: Ad Hoc Networks and Professional Ethics.

In a team of three, over four weeks, she's working on her project - "Fibre optic fault localisation in a FITH network, using OTDR technology." Unscrambling the acronyms, FITH = Fibre In The Home, OTDR = Optimal Time Domain Reflection meter. For the duration of the project the team are living in a hostel in Chennai and working at the BSNL Telecoms Company. It's going well with just a week remaining.

Because both her higher secondary school and this college are privately run she has not received a free government lap top and students can only access college computers during their lunch hour, although they can download from the modem any time. Consequently Meena feels her theoretical studies aren't getting sufficient attention, although she gains ground in practicals. Staff regard her as a good girl but, "super grade" for practical work and good at her relationship with other course members and in any competitive activities. Meena remarks that living at MSGH among 110 girls was excellent practice for life at college and there are no social barriers among the students – wealthy students mix in well and they all help each other.

Campus interviews have started and she's been seen by GEOSYS Technologies of Chennai. In three stages they check aptitude, which she passed, then technical skills – she and 3 others dropped out. The third stage would have been HR setting out their offer. The going rates are around Rs 17 to 20,000 monthly. She's not greatly perturbed and there will be others; she had no problem with the English used during her interviews. Her interest is in software and her ideal job would be with TATA Consultancy Services, also in Chennai. Her family is happy for her to work away from home and once settled into a job she hopes to study part-time for her Masters degree in engineering.

Meena's family moved from near Dindigul, to Madurai to shorten her daily commute to college. Now the college bus picks her up at 8am and drops her off at 5.30, taking just one hour. Private study

takes some 2 to 3 hours daily and she avoids any sporting or cultural activities on campus. Instead she enjoys technical competitions – her latest is to develop a maths model for circuit debugging.

Mother is now a housewife and Father has adapted to city life; farm coolee work now replaced by general labouring, like painting or assisting an electrician. Her elder brother drives construction equipment, an Hitachi excavator, while younger sister continues with her Bachelor of Commerce course from home. In some two years it's likely her family will be thinking about Meena's marriage but whatever happens she is clear that her Groom will need to commit to her continuing to work and to study if that's not completed.

Meena has had no contact from her Sponsors but they are at the forefront of her mind. She sends her heartfelt thanks, adding that she is really proud of Uncle and Aunty and grateful to have had their support. From her own comments and results and, echoed by her Tutor, not having her own laptop has held her back, although sheer determination and hard work has minimised its effect. Coming in time for preparation for her final exams, she was delighted to receive a laptop from JHC, a full size Merion from a donor in England. Her efforts certainly have earned it; hopefully it will give her the edge for her finals and make her studies for her part-time Masters easier.



Interviewed and Written by: Terry Quadling, Volunteer

26th February 2017

JHC NOTES

JHC has recently donated laptops to some high level apprentice students but has not yet been able to give to all that need one - Meena's turn came just in time.

Wow, what a success.