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I have tread miles and miles of this earth. I'm a nomad. My life is a journey. The literal journey has been strenuous and tough and jolly good at times. But I'm also a child... My mind flies in directions unknown to legs and roads. I have a million wings and I can transform the world, my world atleast, If given a chance at childhood.”

-www.vanavil.org



Vanavil Annual Report 2014-15



This Annual report is a special one for Vanavil as we're turning ten this year. It's been a journey that's marked by learning, surviving, struggling and yet hoping dreaming and going forward.

Vanavil's existence has been marked by ups and downs on many fronts but especially on our 10th anniversary we can be proud of our steady progress in providing the children a safe and happy space that can motivate them to look at education and self development with hope.



2014-15 Key Developments

Education at Vanavil

- ❖ On the academic side we focussed more on enhancing language and mathematical skills
- ❖ We have slowly introduced exams at Vanavil as the children find it difficult to cope with exams when they graduate from Vanavil to the government school
- ❖ We have strengthened the teaching side with a substantial increase in teacher salaries thanks to an anonymous donor and Srinath Baba.
- ❖ Teacher oriented planning has been introduced from December and teachers have been given responsibilities for various decision making at the school level.
- ❖ Children at Vanavil had a good school year starting from our kinder garden section – where our teacher Sathya made her own teaching aids and has adapted Montessori methods to our needs.
- ❖ Classes one to five did well in subjects and also excelled in various events organised at the school such as science fair, Theatre day, commemorations of various personalities etc., Please see some pictures below from our events.
- ❖ Regular community meetings have been held and we are trying to have a mothers meeting separately every month to discuss educational and health matters
- ❖ Six new children have joined Vanavil this year. Three of them are from

another nomadic community who work as barefoot astrologers, the community was passing through our village and the children wanted to study at Vanavil and the parents enrolled them with us. Arthi and Karthi were brought in to Vanavil by their father a chronic alcoholic on the advice of the Railway police. Little Vijay was brought by the Social welfare Board after he was found begging at the Mayiladuthurai Bus stand.



HIGH SCHOOL

(After finishing 5th standard at Vanavil kids go to a nearby government high school but stay in the Vanavil Hostel.)

- ❖ Till last year kids who attend 6th to tenth standards were studying at a school in Nagapattinam which was 10 kilometres away and hence was creating logistical issues and dropouts. This academic year we shifted the children to the Pondicherry government high school close to

Vanavil and since the school was four kilometres away and the bus services were erratic we needed transportation

- ❖ Thanks to Srinath and a whole bunch of his friends and Devishree we were able to raise money to buy bicycles for the children who go to Puducherry School.
- ❖ Selvarani, Manikandan and Kalidas took their ESLC exams this year and cleared the exams. They are planning to write their tenth exams also through the private training. Selvarani is an industrious child who used the gap of four months to train herself in typewriting and Tailoring.
- ❖ Manikandan is at Chennai getting trained in Sculpture with Nataraj and Solai at Artree Studios.
- ❖ Murugammal is finishing her first year at the teacher training college and will be in her second year from June where she will be getting hands on teaching training
- ❖ P.Sudha cleared her Plus two and is applying to various degree courses to continue her education.



Festivals and Events

- ❖ Every year we celebrate Deepavali and Christmas at the school and this year also we had a wonderful Deepavali celebrations thanks to Krishna sweets and a whole bunch of our donors.
- ❖ For this year's working women's day we invited a few parents of our kids and felicitated them.
- ❖ Many other events were organised by the teachers on birthdays of national leaders like B.R.Ambedkar, poet Bharathidasan, Poet Bharathi etc., Science day, World Theatre day were conducted and kids made experiments and plays with great enthusiasm.



Admin

- ❖ There were two important administrative changes at Vanavil. Our principal Chandran got a government job and quit. Our project manager Emaya quit her job to pursue her education. Both of them are still involved with the school as volunteers.
- ❖ We have created a new position that of a social worker to ensure proper tracking and retrieval of drop out children and our excellent warden Shalini has been promoted to this post because of her rapport with the communities and consistent efforts to get children back to school.
- ❖ We sold the School Van last year as the maintenance costs were escalating and affecting our fragile finances. Anand who bought the Van from us offered to run the Van for our needs if we pay him an agreed sum every month. So we sold the van but it continues run the trips for the kids. While the van no longer carries the school name, the new driver is doing a better job managing maintenance so running costs are down. However we are not able to take the kids out on trips as much as we used to do earlier for their curricular and non curricular activities. We are hoping to find raise and buy a new Van in the coming year.
- ❖ The Wipro sponsored computer lab will be an important addition to our school this year. The lab is Matt's brainchild and will help teachers and children in learning English in an interactive way amongst a load of other good things.
- ❖ Our experience with SSA has been a mixed one this year. We had a CEO at the beginning of the academic year who was finding fault with the teachers and speaking too harsh to the children. Thankfully he was transferred out on complaints and peace was restored.



Farm

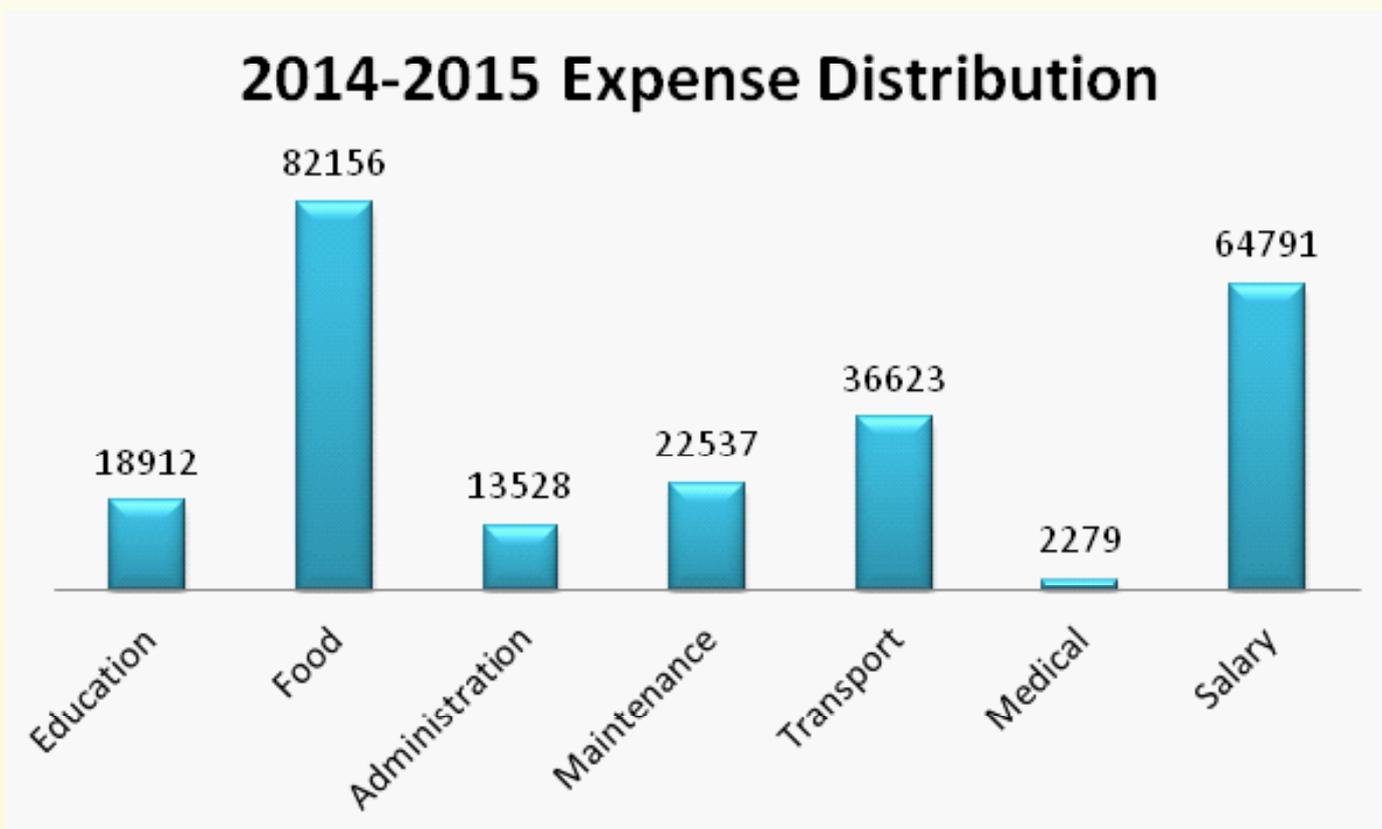
- ❖ We had a good crop in the Vanavil's Karnilam farm and we have got one whole year's supply of rice for the school.
- ❖ Thanks to Wipro's generous decision to fence the whole land we are also raising a vegetable garden and will soon be eating home-grown veggies
- ❖ Our livestock strength increased by three new calves. We also lost an elder calf to an accident. We are self sufficient on milk and are selling small amounts of excessive milk to the market.
- ❖ Even though we have been raising paddy every year we were not able to store our paddy for our own use as we did not have a godown and thanks to a very generous anonymous donor we have a granary cum cattle shed and a firewood storage space now.



Financials

Our total expenses for the year 2014-2015 was almost 29 lakhs against a fundraising target of 31 lakhs. Financial income in the year 2014-2015 was not enough and we managed by paying lower salaries, deferring maintenance, and cutting back on workshops, training, and school functions.

Salary and Food expenses account for the larger portion of the Vanavil budget. After a recent evaluation by an external expert, we have raised salaries of staff on par with market conditions. Education expenses are relatively lower as SSA provides us with all books, school uniforms etc.



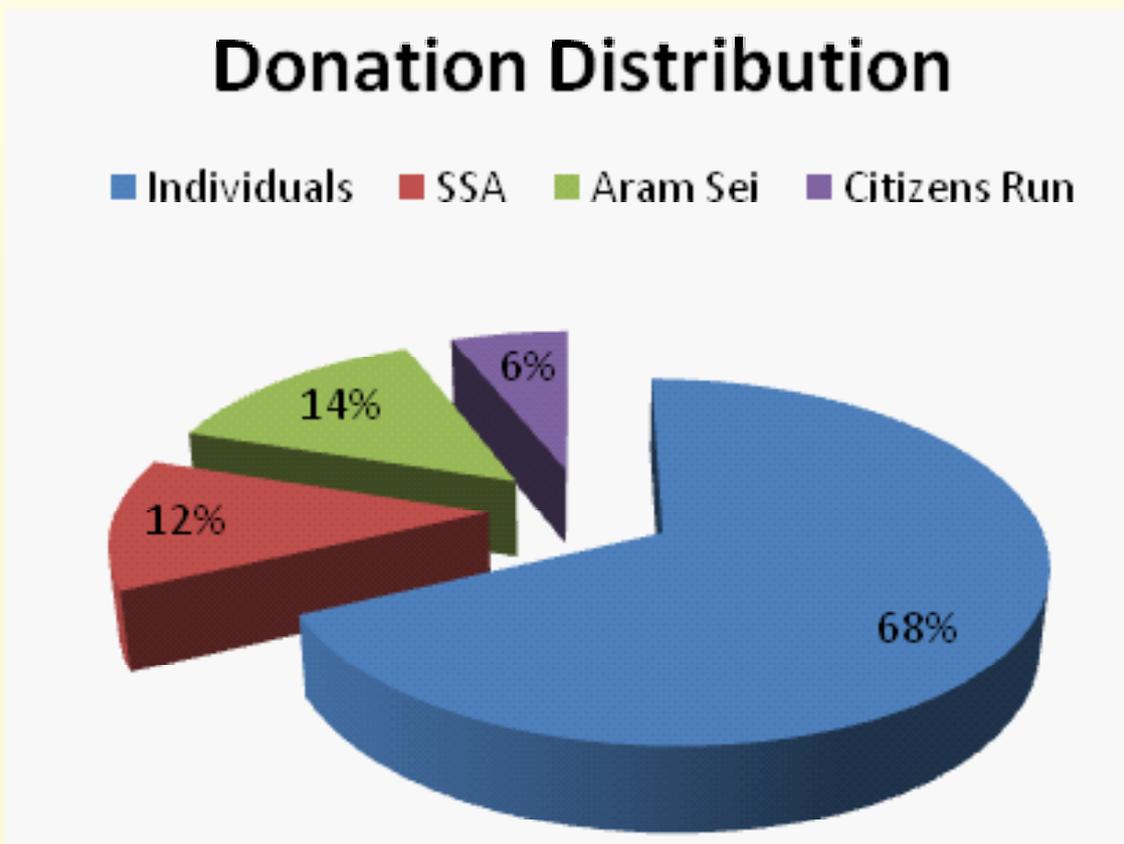
Due to lack of funds we have cut down on training workshops for the teachers and activities for children involving an outside resource person and annual day/sports day celebrations. We have planned to raise enough funds going forward to meet all children related workshops, celebrations without fail and on time.

In spite of the less than expected financial income in the year 2014-2015, Vanavil made sure that all its debts were repaid and is debt free entering 2015 academic year.

Vanavil is supported by few organizations and a hundreds of individual donors financially and also by providing other support. Sarva Siksha Abyan, a Central Government of India program continued their support for the last academic year. Aram Sei Foundation and Citizens Run Trust provided a onetime grant to Vanavil to cover operational expenses and their support came at a time when we are almost at a financial crisis.

Right from the inception of Vanavil, hundreds of individual donors have been supporting Vanavil in terms of financial support and other support mechanisms for children. Almost two thirds of the donations came from individual donors in the year 2014-2015

Vanavil Patrons



- ❖ Aram Sei a wonderful US based organisation that raises money towards the uplift of underprivileged children in India gave a grant of 8000 dollars to Vanavil this year towards Food expenses..
- ❖ Government of India through the SSA –education for all programme continues to be one of our big donors and in 2014-15 they supported Vanavil with Rs 8,59,301 from SSA this year.
- ❖ Citizen's run a wonderful initiative by our friend and a long-time Vanavil supporter Mr. Ranvir Shah generously donated 2 lakhs to Vanavil this year from the proceeds of the Citizens run fund raiser. We thank Ranvir for his continuous patronage.
- ❖ An NRI supporter of Indian education got in touch with Vanavil looking at vanavil's facebook page and updates and they have built us a Granary and are also donating towards stabilising the teacher team with better salaries. A big thank you to this amazing family who are so into educating poor children and who want to remain faceless behind the mammoth work that they are doing with Vanavil and many other such initiatives.
- ❖ At a very critical time during last year when a grant we were hoping to get fell through Prasad Velamuri who has helped us substantially the previous years too, pitched in with a huge donation which saved us from a bankruptcy.
- ❖ Apart from these three or four grants Vanavil has been kept alive by our many many individual donors who have trusted us and have remained continuous donors. A very big thank you to TPGITians friends of Dinesh, our Trustee and Devishree, our key patron have and still remain a very solid and steady source of support and good will to Vanavil.
- ❖ Srinath Baba visited Vanavil few years ago and has been a great support, brought in Matt Wennersten and Malathi Velamuri, Prasad Velamuri, Harald Raabe, Adum Grubb and many many others. A big Thank you for all

of them for revitalising Vanavil and strengthening it at an important moment. Since then, Matt and Mala's friends and family, including Nithin Umapathi, Mayuresh Kshetramade, Paul and Ambika Prokop, Steven Bailey, Sudha Rao, Gopal Vutha, and John and RE Wennersten have also joined the Vanavil Community.

Media

- ❖ We were featured on the cover of a very popular Tamil children's magazine Chutti Vikatan.
- ❖ Scroll also carried a story about Vanavil in their Ten years of Tsunami news coverage.
- ❖ Two filmmakers have been filming at Vanavil for possible documentaries and they both generously made two video clips on Vanavil and gifted it to us.

Please visit <http://vanavil.org> to watch the videos and <http://scroll.in/article/695450/How-the-2004-tsunami-changed-the-fate-of-Tamil-Nadu%27s-poorest-nomads> to see the article



Support Vanavil

Vanavil has thrived on the generous support of many many donors and we are raising funds to keep it running for the eleventh year. Please write a cheque to “Vanavil Trust” and send it to us or transfer money directly to Vanavil's accounts.

Rs.20,000 will support a child in Vanavil for a year

Rs.5000 a month will support a teacher.

Rs.3500 will support a special meal on a day of your choice.

If you are transferring money from outside India please transfer to

Bank Details

Indian Bank

Treasury Branch

2, Jehangir Street

Chennai 600 001

SWIFT CODE : IDIBINBBTSY

treasury@indianbank.co.in

Beneficiary info:

Account Name : Vanavil Trust

Account No : 437603809

Bank Name : Indian Bank

Branch : Nagapattinam

IDIBINBBTSY : XLC No: 3582021188001 - Standard Chartered Bank

IDIBINBBTSY : XLC No: 36045868- Citi Bank

To transfer funds from within India, please use the following details

Account Name : Vanavil Trust

Account No : 954121293

Bank Name : Indian Bank

Branch : Nagapattinam



Annexure I

What We Do at Vanavil

We help kids from extremely marginalized and historically nomadic communities, who would otherwise be living on the streets and begging, fortune telling, selling plastic, or worse.

Vanavil was set up in 2005 for children from the Narikuravar and Boom BoomMattukarar community devastated by the tsunami in Nagapattinam and who had slipped through the gaps of government and NGO aid. In recent times, kids from different communities across the state have spontaneously come to Vanavil to find a safe place.

We house homeless kids in a supervised hostel.

We provide three meals a day.

We get kids back into school. Most of the kids who come to us are underweight, abused, ill, or otherwise emotionally troubled. We run primary school classes on-site, and, after kids are healthy and accustomed to the school environment, we enroll them in local schools, monitor their progress, provide mentoring and support through the qualifying exams at 10th and 12th grade, and help place them in colleges.

Annexure II

Looking back at the decade that made Vanavil

- ❖ Christmas' eve of 2004 was a day of devastation for the people of the Asian coast, many thousands lost lives and dear ones.
- ❖ A group of volunteers who were working in Nagapattinam spotted Murugammal with an emaciated Lakshmi in a Tea shop in Nagapattinam bus stand begging for food.
- ❖ They followed the kids and found out that they are from a nomadic community, traditionally performers, who have been reduced to beggars in the modern day.
- ❖ Attempts to get the kids to a nearby government school failed miserably as they were visibly different; had no literacy, numeracy; and were treated badly by other children and sometime teachers.
- ❖ Meanwhile all efforts to save Lakshmi the toddler from the clutches of malnutrition failed and she succumbed to it.
- ❖ Vanavil was started on the 6th of June 2005 as a bridge school to get the child beggars from the nomadic communities with a simple goal of no more Lakshmis
- ❖ Initially the school was totally an expeditional experimental space where kids got to do what they wanted and academics were given disguised in art and theatre.
- ❖ Slowly the age and skills were matched and the school that started with twenty odd kids on the first day grew.
- ❖ We started following the state board syllabus and got affiliated to the drop out eradication project of the Indian government called the SarvaSikshaAbhiyan.
- ❖ We brought down child begging within that hamlet to almost zero percent.
- ❖ We have retained the girl children in the school and our eldest children are now in colleges and Higher secondary classes.
- ❖ The kids are being exposed to arts and other fields even now to sustain their interest in learning

- ❖ We have a wonderful child friendly campus built for us by Wipro Cares an employee donor initiative of Wipro.
- ❖ We run classes from KG to 5; we send kids from our hostel to the nearby government school for 6th to 10th.
- ❖ We have a farmland again leased to us by Wipro cares where we grow some of our food, soon we want to become food self sufficient.
- ❖ We have cattle donated by individuals which takes care of our milk requirements.
- ❖ Lakshmi our eldest student is pursuing her second year in college and Murugammal who started of this whole project by approaching us in the Nagapattinam bus stand is now getting trained to be a teacher at the District Institute of Education training in Kurukkathi.



