



Dear Friends of Vanavil,

Wishing you all a very happy and prosperous Festival season this 2016 and we invite you to add the children of Vanavil to your celebrations this year. Deepavali is a favourite day for the kids of Vanavil as it also means the day that they get their only new dress and a sumptuous meal and some crackers which they love. You can add a child's happiness and celebration to your festival celebrations by sponsoring Vanavil's Deepavali expenses.

**A thousand rupees can get a child
a new dress and festival meal**



Recovering from the floods that affected us badly in the beginning of the year, Vanavil has had an eventful quarter with many new developments and events. A main achievement this year would be the construction of the new boys hostel in the campus which would solve the space crunch and also help us adhere to the rules of the social welfare board effectively by keeping the boys in a separate building. Thanks to the efforts of Usha Subramanian and friends we have started the construction and hopefully the new boys home would be occupied before the end of this year.

artwork for props, the annual play has become the culmination of many talents and learning that takes place in Vanavil through the year.



We held our school annual day on 31st of July and like last year there was a student play "The River of the Butterflies." A very grand production with 40 students acting across classes and many more taking part in making

This year we also held a project day. May 9th two leading historians, Bhavani Raman from the University of Toronto and Senthil Babu from the French institute, visited the school and conducted an oral history workshop for the teachers and students and planned out a project of getting to know the Cauvery delta. Based on the inputs and plans, teachers and students divided themselves into three groups and did field researches in three villages.

The Cauvery delta irrigation systems was the topic of one group and it

made a stunning 3D model of the irrigational canals of the Puduchery village. The group also researched about the indigenous paddy varieties of the Cauvery delta and exhibited those almost extinct paddy varieties.



The second group studied the Karuvelakadu village where environmental degradation has rendered the village into a desert in the midst of the delta. Studying soil samples and investigating salt water plants, they made two huge and amazing maps of how the village was before shrimp farms came in and how it is now. They also made a small skit about the plight of young people in the village who all have left the village due to its unliveable condition.

The third group took Thirupungur village where the legendary Nandanar was born as their site of exploration and they went into land holdings of the delta and how temples function as purveyors of land access and labour. They made a video about the Nandanar legend and how it brings forth the changing land holding patterns. They also sang the songs of the Nandanar charithram and made poignant paintings of the temple.



Student Stories

Meena and Selvarani passed tenth standard and are now pursuing their eleventh in the St. Theresa higher secondary school in Tarangampadi.

Sixteen children have finished class 5 at Vanavil and are now admitted into the 6th standard in the Puduchery high school.

K.Sudha passed her HSC re examination and along with Vedhanayaki has joined the Kalangarai Community College. While Sudha chose Nursing, Vedhanayaki is pursuing DTP and design course in the community college.

The eldest student of Vanavil, M.Lakshmi, has finished her degree in economics and has joined Vanavil as our accountant.

Vanaviller M. Arthi won the overall sports championship trophy at the Puduchery school annual sports event. Lakshmanan won three individual medals in the Sports day.

Seven new admissions through the educational department have taken place. Three single parent Children who were rescued from Velankanni and four children from the Malai kuravar tribe have been admitted and are now being trained to bridge age/skill gaps so that they can be mainstreamed.



Teachers Trainings and Team building

Manimaran, an amazing teacher from the nearby Melaradhapuram Government School, has become a great support system for the Vanavil school. He has been regularly giving training sessions to the teachers. He has also visited the school for the Annual day, Parents' awareness and Enrolment meetings.

Ezhildasan, a child rights expert who works with the ChildLine project, has also taken a special interest into Vanavil and has been holding awareness workshops about child rights and best practices to monitor child abuse issues for the teachers.

We thank the two young persons who have voluntarily come to the support of Vanavil and hope to build a local support base such as this wider and stronger in the coming days.

On June 5th Vanavil Board member and educator Matt Wennersten and Vardini, our volunteer teacher who coaches our board exam students, held a Teacher training workshop on child centric classroom practices.



On August 1st, our board member Natarajan and artist Bharani held a training on arts education and using art making in subject teaching to the teachers at Vanavil.

Farzana Fathima has joined as our new computer teacher and the boys hostel has got a very enthusiastic new warden in Kapil Dev.

Thanks to the efforts of our project manager Durga, Vanavil holds weekly Yoga classes from June and Suresh Prabu our new visiting Yoga teacher has been a hit with the kids.

The collective work the teachers did for the project day and the school play which brought together all the resource persons teachers and students have strengthened the Vanavil team into a happy and efficient one.



Donors, Support and fund raising

The biggest support this year has been from Usha Subramanian from Singapore and her friends. They have supported the construction of new hostel and also support the salaries for the ongoing year. Apart from this they support the two afterschool centres in Porakudy and Neelapadi.

Thanks to The Hindu we have secured a grant from Shreyas – The Hindu’s flood relief corpus. The grant of 2,86,899 is towards repairing the roof of the old boys hostel and the kitchen roof damaged in the floods earlier this year. It has also provided us some amazing books to the library and notebook supplies for the year.

Thanks to our founding supporter Wipro cares, we were able to secure

the donation of Rs.24,497/- from the University of Canberra towards purchase of onetime expenses.

Kabaali fame Film Director Ranjith visited Vanavil and interacted with the children about their future plans and dreams. He has also promised to support Vanavil in the future.

Flood Relief and Safe Houses

In a separate note, the modest flood relief work that Vanavil undertook has resulted in permanent safe houses for 16 Irula families in Kanchipuram district. Thanks to the Environmental Support Group’s donations, Ashoka Trust employee’s contribution, Lavanya Sundarrajan’s efforts and the support of Vocera employees and the Tamil sangam of GC (GCTS), Contributions by the MCC students and many many other well



wishers we were able to support the construction of 16 houses in Sengodi nagar. The houses were constructed and completed by Makkal Manram a group that works with Irulars in Kanchipuram and they were handed over to the beneficiaries on the 28th of August. We played a small role in reaching immediate relief and enabling this house construction. We are very thankful to the many trusting donors who entrusted their support to this endeavour.

Community, Tribal Institute Visit and Mentions

We held community meeting at the Vanjur Narikuravar settlement after the state government announced that the Narikuravars would be added to the schedule tribes list to explain that to the parents and to motivate them to send the children to school regularly. Similarly an awareness meeting was held in Sellur for the parents.

The Tribal research centre at Ooty sent a young researcher Subin to Vanavil to study about the Boom Boom Mattukarars in detail. He visited Sellur and other villages in the district and Vanavil facilitated his visit.

A very heartening outcome for Vanavil has come out in the study undertaken by V.Geetha and Salai Selvam on parenting and schools. In a paper titled, "Parenting at school: A case of re-imagining School Spaces", Vanavil is mentioned among other schools as a positive example.

"The appropriateness of school as a place for nurturing children, not only in terms of learning, but of ethical growth and development as well is a subject that has to stretch beyond the singular idea of the right to education, and include a re-definition of the schooling ideal itself. In this context, the experiment that is the Vanavil school seems in instructive example... Having been in touch with Vanavil since its inception, and seen how parents from the communities in question had initially approached the school, and schooling, it was fascinating to see how, in less than a decade, communities, suspicious of learning and education had come to accept it and even began to think of their own future in terms of what their children would do in the years to come. We spoke to over thirty parents, including grandmothers, and they charted their own growing interest in the school clearly for us: putting their views and our observations together, we have pieced together a rather amazing story."

The paper was published in "Education at the Crossroads" – IIC Quarterly Journal.

On a less serious side, Tamil Femina and Vikatan Thadam featured our Managing trustee Revathi in their magazines for the work Vanavil has been doing.

