



VANAVIL ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17



Educating Nomadic Children

Vanavil School, Keezhakarayiruppu Village, Sikkal Post,
Nagapattinam District, Tamil Nadu, India 611008.
Phone 04365 - 245417 (9am to 5pm)
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In twelve years we have **touched** the lives of more than **500 children** from the periphery of the society.
Rescued over 200 children from the clutches of **child begging and child labour**

We work with the **most marginalised** and almost **completely invisible** nomadic tribal communities

We have developed an **innovative model of education** for children who never get a chance with education

We have **successfully completed 12 years** of providing education and livelihood to the nomadic communities.

Outreach centres
for nomadic tribal children in
Porakudi and Neelapadi

We are now a family of 260 which includes the students, teachers and non-teaching staff.

The Lakshmi stories...

Vanavil's story started with a Lakshmi in 2005. She was this four month old infant we met during our volunteering in the aftermath of the Asian Tsunami 2004 which ravaged Nagapattinam to ground zero. Lakshmi was carried by her elder sister Murugammal who came to beg from us in the Nagapattinam bus stand. The idea of Vanavil (without that colorful name) germinated from our desire to give Lakshmi a chance at life. We took her to hospitals, got her healthy food supplements but eventually lost her a few months later when she succumbed to Pneumonitis and other medical complications arising out of her malnourished infancy.



We have another Lakshmi story to share with you all.

Of course as many of you know by now, we nevertheless went ahead and started Vanavil to give the other children from the nomadic communities a chance at health, education and happiness. The oldest student of Vanavil was also a Lakshmi. She came to Vanavil as a ten year old with no literacy or numeracy stuck to us and with sheer determination and grit completed her school education, graduated in economics and last year joined Vanavil as its accountant. We have come a full circle with our two Lakshmis. Many more circles are at various stages of progress, still this completed circle gives us tremendous pride, motivation and determination.



What We Do



Education

- We are a very happy school!
- We run Tamil medium primary school classes on-site.
- We enroll older students in local schools and monitor their progress.
- We provide mentoring and support through qualifying exams at 10th and 12th grades and university.
- We work with the community to instil the “academic habit” in children, meeting with parents often and intervening when necessary to prevent child marriage.

Hostel

- 100 underprivileged children in a supervised hostel.
- Three nutritive meals and milk.
- Healthcare for malnourished children.
- We serve as a safe space for children found abandoned or in conflict with law.
- Holistic development with sports, yoga and arts.



Farm

- Rice and pulses grown on campus
- Milk needs met by a 9 member cattle farm
- Organic vegetable garden
- Houses three ponds
- Farming taught to children

Outreach centres

- Two outreach centres in Neelapadi and Porakudi catering to 100 children from the nomadic tribes
- After school academic support
- Nutritious evening snack
- Sports, theatre and other extra curricular sessions
- Support for students appearing for 10th and 12th grade board exams
- Tracking dropouts and getting them back into school



Background of the communities

The “Boom Boom Mattukarars” speak Telugu and travel the landscape accompanied by their traditional music; a mixture of cow bells, a homemade drum, and Nayanam. This community has slipped through the cracks, not only of State welfare programs but very often, even the census. Merely a decade ago they made a living predicting futures while travelling with their decorated cows and receiving rice in return. Today a vast majority of the community, especially women and children are beggars or plastic ware vendors. They often travel as far as Chennai and Kerala for their trade.

“Narikuravars” are the gypsy descendants of central Indian plains. To make a living, they sell beads, make artefacts like needles, hairpins, pins etc., This community known for their vibrant culture, now exist outside the social boundaries of society. They sell wares at bus stops and festivals and are in a vulnerable social situation in which they are criminalised. Recently they were shifted from the ‘Most backward’ community status to ‘Scheduled tribe’ list after many years of struggle. Only a very small percentage of Narikuravars have attained education and other modern benefits.





OPERATIONS

- 15 acre campus near Sikkal, built by Wipro Cares.
- 260 students and staff, approx. 100 live on-site.
- Computer Lab with Internet and Skype facilities.
- Kitchen serving Healthy nutritive food.
- Girls & Boys hostels.
- Farm (paddy, fruits, vegetables, milk).
- Neelapadi & Porakudi after school centres for children from nomadic communities.
- College Scholarship fund for older students.



FINANCIALS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Vanavil Actual Financials FY16-17

1-Apr-2016 to 31-Mar-2017

Fund Raising	
Funds for Programme	₹28,53,614
Grants for Infrastructure	₹24,90,619
SSA Contributions	₹9,46,061
Funds for Flood Relief *	₹67,020
Total Inflow	₹67,89,367
Expenses	
Health and Nutrition	₹11,41,108
School Salaries	₹11,13,718
Education	₹6,79,290
Transport	₹4,49,322
Repairs and Maintenance	₹2,96,613
Administration	₹2,85,913
New Infrastructure	₹24,71,250
Flood Relief*	₹5,55,650
Total Outflow	₹69,92,864
* Non-recurring	

Vanavil Budget Projection FY17-18

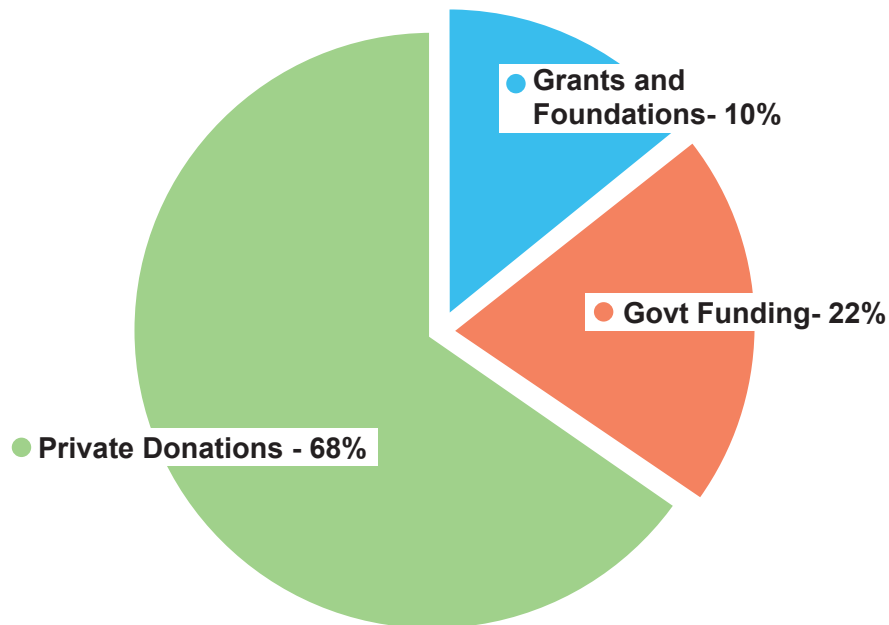
1-Apr-2017 to 31-Mar-2018

Fund Raising	
Funds for Programme	₹40,00,000
Grants for Infrastructure	₹20,00,000
SSA Contributions	₹8,29,812
Total Inflow	₹68,29,812
Expenses	
Health and Nutrition	₹14,83,440
School Salaries	₹14,47,833
Education	₹7,47,219
Transport	₹4,94,254
Repairs and Maintenance	₹3,26,274
Administration	₹3,14,504
New Infrastructure	₹20,00,000
Total Outflow	₹68,13,524

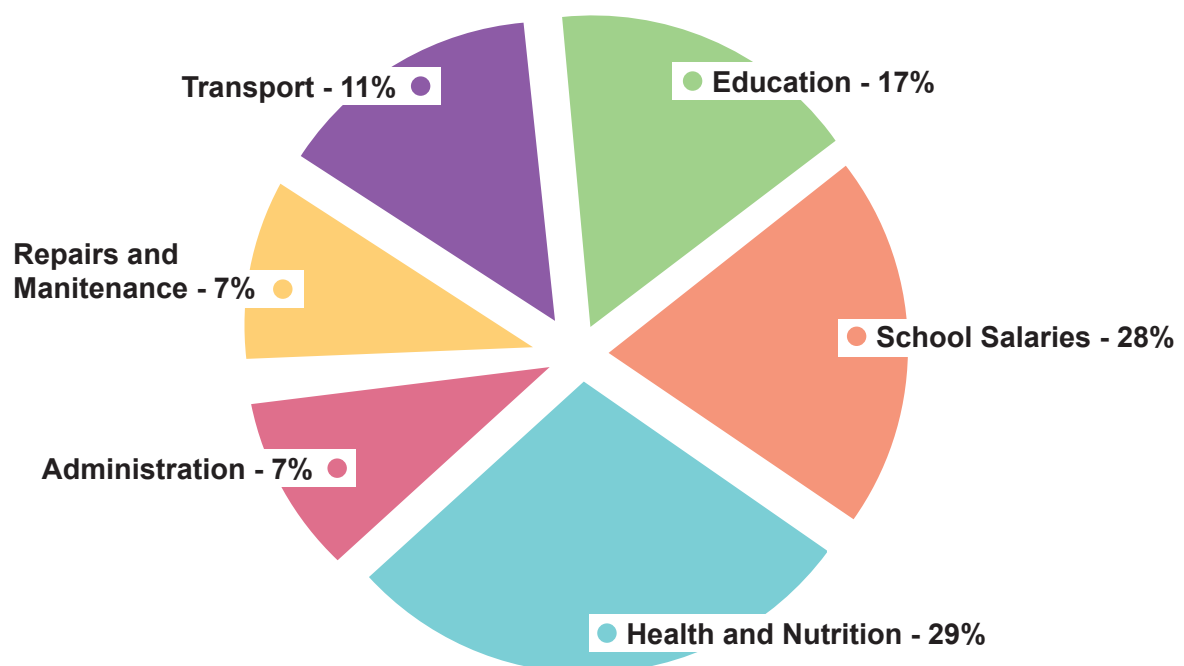
COST PER CHILD

FY	Children	Budget (USD)	Per Child	Child / Day
2012-13	125	\$40,213.21	\$321.71	\$0.88
2013-14	133	\$45,370.01	\$341.13	\$0.93
2014-15	145	\$59,064.86	\$407.34	\$1.12
2015-16	151	\$66,061.63	\$437.49	\$1.20
2016-17	155	\$61,146.55	\$394.49	\$1.08
2017-18	172	\$70,919.37	\$412.32	\$1.13

Vanavil is primarily funded by private individuals. Depending on the year, an additional 5-20% of funding comes from the government through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) program for dropout eradication. In addition to our annual grant, Vanavil also receives support from other philanthropic foundations including Marc Sauquet Foundation, Tamil Nadu Foundation, Aram Sei, Citizen's Run Trust, the Shamdassani Foundation, Wipro Cares, AASAI and others.



The bulk of our expenditure is on Health & Nutrition (29%), staff salary (28%), and other direct education costs including transportation (27%).



Sridhar Boys hostel

– a dream come true for Vanavil.

Vanavil School works with children of nomadic tribal communities and the School is heavily reliant on a hostel space for its students. While we have a wonderful campus thanks to Wipro Cares, the hostel block was designed for sixty children only when we built the premises. The numbers have grown and also the Tamilnadu Government decision that boys hostel and girls hostel cannot be in the same building created a need



for additional space. We had to shift the boys out of the building into a small guestroom and make them sleep in classrooms. The cramped guest room and cold class rooms were a major discomfort for the children and the team.

Subbu and Usha when they first visited Vanavil two years ago saw the boys hostel – a tiled structure ravaged by the 2014 floods and that impression was the starting point for the new hostel that stands tenacious in Vanavil campus today.

Thanks to their efforts and generous donations from them and their friend Rajeev we now have a spacious and efficient boys hostel – Sridhar Boys Hostel, named after their common friend who passed away some time ago.



The friendship and compassion of these donors have made our long standing dream come true. We inaugurated the hostel on the 18th of January, 2017 and kids have moved in. Another important and crucial support has been from Mr. Raman who made the whole construction process a very pleasant one by Co-ordinating with our amazing engineer Ramesh who did a great job of building up the space as per our wishes and also with a strong structural footing.

It is built into a warm place with light and air and a lot of hope! Vanavil children and team extend a heartfelt thanks to all our donors and supporters who made this possible.



We had some great organisations and individuals who supported us this year. **The Marc Sauquet foundation** helped us to cover a portion of salaries and food as they always do.

'Shreyas', a charitable trust governed by **The Hindu**, to support the rehabilitation of those devastated by the floods repaired our flood ravaged room and they also bought us a load of books to make our library up to date and child friendly.

TAMIL NADU FOUNDATION helped us with a much needed napkin incinerator to dispose sanitary napkins which were a huge issue for the young girls and the school sewage system. They also got us bookshelves for the library and utensils for the kitchen.





Flood relief work

Tamilnadu experienced the fury of two floods in Decembers of 2015 and 2016. With our experience in the Tsunami relief work, we wanted to work towards filling the gaps and finding people who usually get neglected in massive relief and rehabilitation operations.

Mainly we concentrated on the Irulas – a primitive tribe living on fringes of the villages and on the banks of water bodies. Others we focussed on were residents of slums of North Madras, Transgenders and Srilankan refugees kept at the Ponneri camp.

With the money given by ESG and ATREE employees' contribution we helped build houses for sixteen Irular families in Sengodi Nagar in Kanchipuram, a great milestone in our flood relief efforts. The housing in which they were staying until the floods were completely destroyed and they



were literally living on the school playground. With the help of Makkal Manram a local group working with Irulas. We could help these families to get a solid roof over their heads. It was a collective effort which has resulted in a safe and strong Irula colony in Sengodi Nagar.



Key Contributors FY16-17

Vanavil is particularly proud to be associated with the following organisations:



Wipro Cares

Shreyas, an initiative of

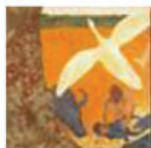


THE HINDU GROUP



ARAM SEI

Supporting Grassroots Charities Worldwide



The
Kalachuvadu
Trust

The Shamdasani Foundation



UNIVERSITY OF
CANBERRA

What they say

V.Geetha, Writer
Director, Tara Books

From what I have seen and known of Vanavil all these years, its founders have been clear that the children that come to Vanavil deserve, as children everywhere and in all circumstances do, an education that treats them with respect, affection and is as concerned with their creative growth as it is with their 'success'. By being mindful, affectionate, and available for dialogue with the children (and their parents) at all times, Vanavil's teachers and supporters have brought forth a unique model of learning that could yet be emulated in other situations, where underprivileged children are being schooled.



Dr.Bhavani Raman, Historian
Professor, University of Toronto

Conducting the social studies and history workshop at Vanavil and interacting with the teachers and students was an exciting and humbling experience. The students and faculty understand our social world with nuance and insight. Their learning style and creativity was palpable in every minute of the workshop. Revathi and her friends have nurtured a culture of learning and teaching that is based on reciprocity --between students and teachers, and among students and teachers and between us and nature. This reciprocity takes as foundational the expressive arts which fill the school with art, colour, movement and joy. I loved every minute I spent there.



Erin Dowd, Director of Curriculum at Level Up Village, USA
Member of the Global Goals Educator Task Force.

Vanavil is a very special place, tucked far away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Over the railroad tracks and across the fields I found welcoming, smiling faces who greeted me with open arms and hearts. It is a unique educational environment where the children can be themselves and learn through exploration and the arts. During my time at Vanavil I watched the children create their own theater production, dance and participate in various visual arts projects in addition to their normal subjects. The children are curious and motivated learners who are creative problem solvers always quick to help others. Vanavil and all those involved will always hold a place in my heart.



Maruthi Baskar, CEO NPCompete
long term supporter of Vanavil

My first visit to Vanavil was a humbling experience. The beautiful compound, natural surroundings and the happy kids make it seem like a regular good old school. But then we took a walk with some 6 through 12 year olds into the nearby fields. Started talking casually... and then it hits you.

These kids had seen so much of life and struggle at that young age. It showed in their eyes, their actions and words. They were all smarter, tougher and more helpful than I ever was at that age, or possibly am right now.

The difference really is Opportunity. Vanavil has done a tremendous job of giving these kids back a slice of their childhood, and an opportunity to break out of their vicious cycle of poverty and isolation.

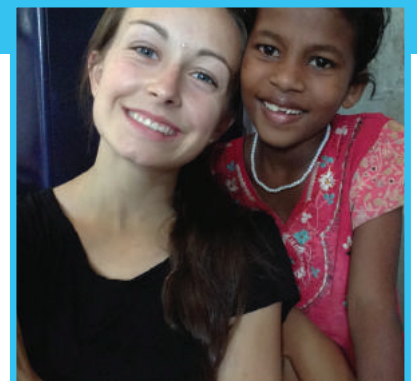
Revathi and the Vanavil team's work is inspirational. It offers hope that we will all see a modern and just world where no one is left behind. It shows how those of us with Opportunity can give back meaningfully.

My very best to Vanavil and its fantastic children!



Delaney, Volunteer, USA

Vanavil is a safe haven for the kids it serves, providing support and encouragement to streamline the children of migrant populations into public school. It acts as a school for the younger children and provides after school help for the older children who have begun attending the public school nearby. Vanavil gives the children a place to stay (in the hostel attached to the school) and people who care for them (the teachers, cooks, and social worker). These underprivileged children are provided with the opportunity for success at Vanavil, a school and home that provides the freedom and support for them to achieve their dreams.

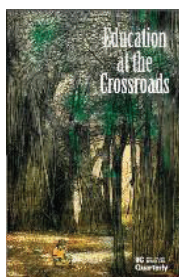




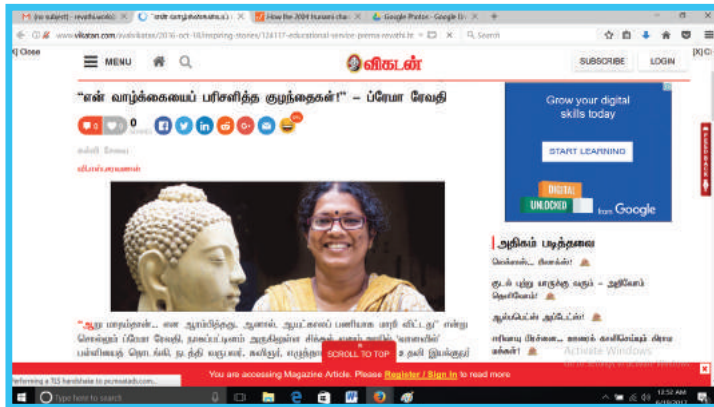
Research Journals & Media opinions on Vanavil

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 an 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.



Article on Revathi's work in Vanavil in Tamil magazine Aval Vikatan

http://www.vikatan.com/avalvikatan/2016-oct-18/inspiring-stories/124117-educational-service-prema-revathi.html?utm_source=vikatan.com&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=2



Femina Tamil calls us the light of education
Femina Tamil issue May 2016.



About writers who do other work, a snippet in Vikatan Thadam

<http://www.vikatan.com/thadam/article.php?aid=119858>



Article on vanavil in Web Magazine scroll.in
<https://scroll.in/article/695450/how-the-2004-tsunami-changed-the-fate-of-tamil-nadus-poorest-nomads>



Vanavil's Deepavali finds its way to Hindu Businessline

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/blink/know/boom-boom-off-to-school/article7872445.ece>

Student News

Two of our students are in 12th grade this year at the St. Theresa's Girls Higher Secondary School, Tarangampadi.

Two more girls who cleared 10th grade in 2017 April, Bhuvaneswari with 80% and Devi with 75% marks are moving to St. Theresa's for their higher secondary classes.

Lakshmanan who cleared 10th grade with 75% and S.Siva are joining CSI Corley higher secondary school in Tambaram, Chennai to pursue their higher secondary education.

Dhanalakshmi who passed her 12th grade with 60% marks has chosen to pursue teacher training and has applied for admission into Diploma in Education course.

K.Sudha and Vedhanayaki who had opted to go the vocational way after completing school have completed their diplomas in Nursing and DTP respectively from the Kalangarai Community College in Nagapattinam. P.Sudha, Vanaviller who secured an engineering seat in the University Engineering College Thirukuvalai has completed her second year and is in her third year of Electronics and Communications engineering.

M.Lakshmi, the eldest of Vanavil has completed her graduation in Economics and has joined Vanavil as its accountant.

Murugammal, completed her teacher training diploma and has joined back with Vanavil as its Kindergarten teacher.



Thanks to Dilip D'Souza who created an endowment in his father's name, we have the **Beins Scholarship Fund** which caters to the fees of the children who pursue education beyond Vanavil.

As more students graduate out of Vanavil and choose to pursue education options outside, we are at a point where this endowment needs to be strengthened.



Arts, Sports and Performance

The Vanavil children, though all are not keen on academics, have tremendous capabilities in sports, arts and performances. Lakshmanan, Bhuvaneshwari and Arthi won medals in the sports events at the Puducherry government high school. Our girl Arthi bagged the overall champion title of the school.

Vanavil holds regular weekly yoga classes since June 2016. Suresh Prabhu, our new yoga teacher is a most awaited person in the Vanavil campus.

Vanavil produces an annual play every year and in 2016 we produced “Van-nathu Poochigalin Aaru” (The River of the Butterflies). The play had a 40 member cast as flowers, tortoises, river, mosquitoes and others. Written and directed by Vijayakumar a renowned theatre person from Thanjavur the performance was resplendent. It was opened at our School Annual day on 31st July 2016.

Vanavil children are using their traditional skills of being village musicians to incorporate their learning at school. The kids produced a Villupaatu on the delta agriculture and its specialities for the project day. They made art, sculptures, masks and performances in their summer camp 2017.

Project based learning: In order to open up learning to the field we had a oral history workshop with historians Bhavani Raman and Senthil Babu which later was followed up by three teams of students and teachers who researched areas of Cauvery delta. Irrigation, paddy, salt water inversion, land distribution, history of the region were all explored in this project where the outcome was stunning 3D models of canal irrigation, huge maps of villages before and after salt water inversion and a moving song and video rendition of Nandanar's story.



Deepavali is a big day for the children of Vanavil as they get their only pair of new clothes (apart from their uniforms) on that day. Thanks to **Sri Krishna sweets** for their continued support Vanavil children got their share of amazing sweets for Deepavali. Various donors sponsored clothes, crackers and a festive meal .

Teacher News

Next to our children, our teachers and support staff are our greatest assets. We have been conducting regular training sessions for the teachers of Vanavil to keep them abreast of whats happening in child centred education models.

Mr. Matt Wennersten and Ms. Vardini, Board members of Vanavil, held a teacher training workshop on child centric class room practices.

Our Board member Natarajan along with artist Barani held a training on arts education and using art making in subject teaching to the teachers at Vanavil.



Shalini, Surya and Gayathri our project team leaders presented the project based learning model at the Educational symposium held by the Azim Premji Foundation in Pondicherry on 11th and 12th of January 2017.

New Initiatives : Seeking partnerships and support

For FY2017-18, we have hired an additional project manager from Azim Premji University, Bangalore to strengthen and expand our programmes in Education, Nutrition, Livelihood, Prevention of Child Marriage and Community Advocacy. Our goal is to expand the number of children served by both our main campus and our study centres.

To create opportunities for rural children in both academic and vocational avenues, Vanavil proposes to open a computer training and English teaching centre in Nagapattinam town. The centre will also be equipped with a career and educational counselor. **We need a building, twenty computers and salaries for a counselor and a trainer.** We are looking out for support and partnerships to take this ahead.

We wish to open a proper sports complex in Vanavil to train and equip students of Vanavil and the neighbouring villages to excel in sports. Apart from making them healthy and team spirited young people, it also is an avenue for them to secure quality education and good jobs in the sports category. Many of the Vanavillers are good in Sports. We look forward to a donor who can **build a sports complex – essentially a Basketball, Football and Volleyball courts.**

We have many dropouts and some children who are not keen on academics. The Nomadic tribes are traditional musicians and performers, so naturally the children at Vanavil are exceptionally good in these. City based service industry job opportunities are a rarity in the Nagapattinam hinterland. Hence we propose to **build a cultural troupe** and train them for a year, who can then go and perform in festivals and events **as a livelihood option.**



Managing Trustee's note

Dear friends,

Thanks to your unflinching support to the cause of reaching education to the most neglected almost invisible children of nomadic tribes and other such small marginalised groups, Vanavil has grown into a tree of shade to these children. If every child matters then we need to seek those who are dropping off the sieves of the larger goals and schemes envisaged by the governments and get them into the safety nets of social security. What else can empower and strengthen such communities than education?

In the aftermath of a horrendous Tsunami which razed Nagapattinam down we started Vanavil with the motive of becoming an accommodative school which will value the innate creativity and courage in these children and to equip them with the literacy, numeracy and science that can help them achieve goals of higher education and employment. Vanavil has been a tough job but a labour of love which enabled us to walk our talk. Without the support of the many many of you



who stood by us in this journey we wouldn't have reached this far.

Our new direction now is to reach the essence of the Vanavil experiences to many more such children. Towards that, we have started two outreach centres which are not schools but after school centres that work with children from such marginalised communities to improve their learning experience.

Vanavil has become a part of the Alternative schools network and we attended their annual meeting held at Vidyavanam School in Anaikatti with many other alternative schools working with alternative pedagogies and with various sections of the society. The meeting gave us a lot of strength and inputs to improve our School and to look at vocational training options.

I also underwent a life transforming course called TEST – Theatre for Education and Social transformation, at the Shiv Nadar University in UP in the last year.

The course is the first of its kind in India headed by the charismatic theatre person Maya Rao which looks at ways of expanding the teaching practice with theatre and arts. Vanavil's unique success with children who traditionally despise schools has been its use of the arts and its very child friendly views on discipline and hierarchy. I'm hoping that this course and the tremendous inputs I've received from the top educators would help me strengthen the core values of the Vanavil Vision.



We now look forward to opening a new counselling centre in Nagapattinam – a space that can equip the poor rural students with the layer of sophistication that they lack, mainly in English, Computer skills and the guidance to apply for courses that will work for them and also for trainings that can enable them to get good jobs. It's still a dream on paper but with the 12 years of experience we have of this journey with the amazing kids of Vanavil and magnificent donors like you we are very much sure that we would build this dream into a reality. A reality that can bridge the gap between the rural students education and the livelihood options available in the big cities.

Thank you,
Revathi R
Managing Trustee (revathi.work@gmail.com)



Donate to Vanavil

We have been sustained by innumerable individual donors and volunteers. We thank all of our past donors, and hope you'll continue to support us! So please come and join this happy cheery group by donating money, time or ideas. We value all these equally. Your donations create change.

- Rs 1,00,000 will pay our food bill for a month.
- Rs 28,400 will sponsor a child's education, health, housing and Nutrition for an entire year.
- Rs 5,000 can provide a special lunch, breakfast or dinner for the Entire school.
- Rs 600 to buy a child a new dress

To transfer funds from Indian Banks, use the following details:

Account Name: Vanavil Trust
Account Number: 954121293
Bank Name: Indian Bank
Branch: Nagapattinam
IFSC: IDIB000N004 (5th character is zero)

Donate to Vanavil from the US

American Association for the Social Advancement of India (AASAI) is a US non-profit organization involved in helping the poor and underprivileged in India, incorporated in Maryland, USA as a charitable organization under the Internal Revenue Service Code, Section 501(c)(3).

US tax-deductible contributions made to AASAI with Project Name of "**Vanavil**" will be 100% forwarded to the Vanavil Trust, with additional support from AASAI.

To make a tax -deductable-in-the-US contribution to Vanavil through AASAI, please send your contributions by check(s) payable to AASAI, and write "**Vanavil**" on the memo line.

Mailing Address:

American Association for Social Advancement of India 11136
Lake Breeze Drive, North Potomac, MD 20878, USA

Thank You

