

VANAVIL



**15<sup>th</sup>**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
2019 - 20



**Educating and Empowering Nomadic Communities!**

Vanavil Trust, Keezhakarayiruppu Village, Sikkal Post, Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, India 611108.  
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## ABOUT US

### VANAVIL

Vanavil is a 15 year old non-profit working with marginalised children from nomadic communities in rural delta region of Tamil Nadu. We run an Alternative School, Children's Home, Afterschool Centres and Higher Education and Employability. We work with the nomadic communities on Education, Child Protection, Health & Nutrition, Community Rights and Livelihoods!

### VISION

To work towards a free, equal and compassionate society by working with Nomadic and other marginalised communities.

### MISSION

To create safe spaces for the children of socially ostracised communities like the nomadic tribes and others. Spaces where these children can access holistic education and nurturing.

To ensure equality and dignity for nomadic communities by working for their protection, development and well being through Education, Livelihood, Advocacy, Health and Nutrition.

### THE VANAVIL VALUES

◆ Democratic ◆ Compassion ◆ Excellence ◆ Transparent ◆ Inclusive

## A HISTORIC MOMENT

On behalf of Vanavil and the Boom Boom Maatukarar community of Nagapattinam we met our district collector Mr Praveen Nair to seek Community certificates and other demands. He immediately asked for a survey to be conducted about the community by the Mahalir Thittam department. He also held a high-level meeting with the community people and various district officials to look into the conditions and problems that affect this community. We express our hearty Thanks to the committed Officer!





## FOUNDER'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

The past year has been a monumental one in Vanavil's lifetime in terms of recognition and growth. We turned 15 and are in the process of consolidating our learnings and are poised to the next phase in which we aspire to become more focused and more impactful.



One of the most remarkable and heartening markers of our age has been our alumnae who are now in various professions and pursuits. We held a retreat for senior students in the beautiful Kotagiri hills. Listening to the first generation of young women and men of the Boom Boom Maatukarar community gave us happiness and hope that no other award or recognition can match! We are working towards the young community leaders becoming a part of Vanavil along with reaching their professional goals.

Our educational work has expanded in the last few years. We are now reaching out to more than 600 children from Nomadic communities. We will expand to Thanjavur district in 2020. That will help us reach many more children by next year.

We turned the Covid19 Pandemic into an opportunity and reached relief to the Nomadic communities all over Tamil Nadu. In that process we've identified many hamlets in the state where they live in abject poverty and extreme marginalization. With no housing, electricity or identity documents in some places to being beggars by profession in many, the picture of the Nomads' existence in Tamil Nadu is very Grim. We resolve to systematically work towards their development and recognition.

We wish to place our immense gratitude on record for our donors and supporters who've stood by us to educate the children of nomadic communities.

Our Goal for the coming year is to align well with our core values of Democracy, Excellence, Compassion, Transparency and Inclusion.

As the Pandemic continues to create fear and uncertainty all over, we believe we can together get over this challenge with compassion. As Buddha says, "In separateness lies the world's great misery; in compassion lies the world's true strength."

Thank you,

Revathi R  
Founder/ Director  
Nagapattinam



## PROBLEM

We started Vanavil in 2005 during the Tsunami Relief times because of Lakshmi, an extremely malnourished child from the Boom Boom Maatukarar Community. We started a school as that seemed like an ideal option to stop the kids from begging and feed them out of chronic malnutrition and to engage them through education. In the last fifteen years our immersive work with the community in Nagapattinam and nearby districts have educated us about the serious socio economic and cultural problems the Nomadic Tribes face in our country.

The Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) were formally known and notified as the "Criminal Tribes of India" (1871) and subsequently "Denotified" in 1952. While these communities are listed under various disadvantaged sub categories by the government, what they all share is the stigma of being "born criminals."

There are nearly 1,500 nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes and 198 denotified tribes, comprising 15 crore Indians, according to the Renke Commission, 2008. These tribes remain socially and economically marginalised even now, depriving many of them of basic human rights.

The Renke Commission, which submitted its report in 2008, highlighted that 50 percent of Nomadic and denotified Communities lacked any kind of documents and 98 percent were landless.

A nomad is a person with no settled home, who moves from place to place as a way of obtaining food, finding pasture for livestock, or otherwise making a living. The word nomad comes from a Greek word that means one who wanders for pasture. Most nomadic groups follow a fixed annual or seasonal pattern of movements and settlements.



According to the report of the NCDNT, only 42 percent of the DNT and 28 percent of the Nomadic Tribes have access to schooling (NCDNT, 2008). The proportion of children accessing Anganwadi centres was also reported to be similar. Instances of discrimination were also reported.



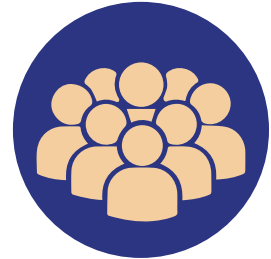
Child Protection



Livelihoods



Health & Nutrition



Community Rights



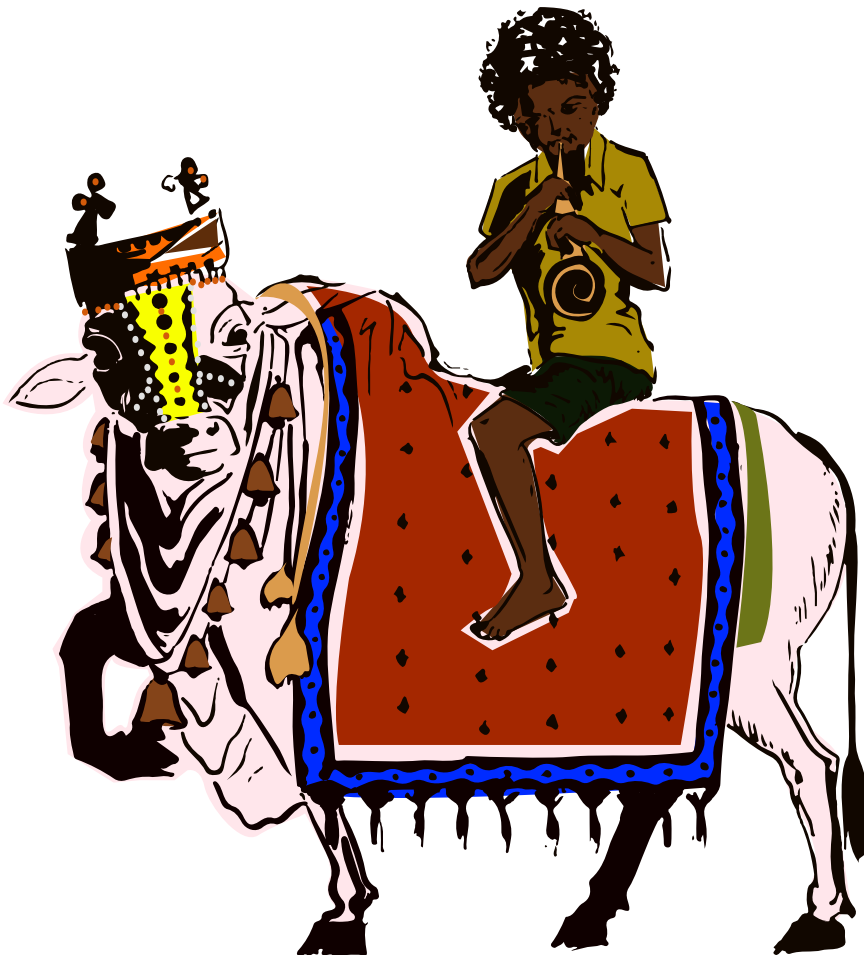
Education



**VANAVIL**  
**SOLUTION**



Disaster Relief







## VANAVIL SCHOOL



To educate the Nomadic children, we realised that the school has to value and respect our children's experiences. We had to acknowledge their lifestyle and devise interesting ways that connected to their realities to make school a fun and worthwhile pursuit for them.

At Vanavil we do and learn, we explore and wonder, we also seek and speculate. We take different themes to explore and think about. In 2019, we took Agriculture as our main theme. The students went on field visits to local breed cattle farms, irrigation system points, rice mills and many other sites to see the processes involved in agriculture. Subsequently, they discussed and articulated their learnings and expressed them in drawings, paintings, models, etc.

We played hosts to the Alternate School Annual Meet on 27th – 29th September 2019. It was a stimulating two days of free flowing conversations with our fellow educators from Vidyodaya, Marudam, Puvudham, CREA, Payir and Thulir Schools. Many Government School Teachers and educationists from APU and TFI also attended the Conference.

We are very happy to inform you that we have received a grant from IFA which supports arts education projects for 1 year. We will be documenting our arts education process and producing Activity books for thematic learning; form a cultural troupe; hold an art exhibition and gather and archive cultural resources about the Boom Boom Maatukarar community.

We took our teacher training process many steps ahead in 2019 with thought provoking workshops on the History of Education, How learning takes place, Math and Science in project-based learning, Social sciences and understanding one's own history and culture. Eminent Educationists V.Geetha, R.Ramanujam of TN Science Forum, Subramaniam and Rashmi Paliwal of Ekalavya conducted these workshops which have motivated our teachers to strengthen our learning environment and processes.





## CHILDREN'S HOME



The Biggest hurdle for the children from Nomadic Communities is the non-sedentary lifestyle of their parents. Even though most of them have settled down in some address or the other in the last decade they still keep travelling to work. So, Vanavil had to be residential from the beginning.

The children are majorly malnourished, constantly skip school due to parents' nomadic nature of livelihood and many times have to work along with their parents.



At the Vanavil Children's home, we provide Shelter, Food, Education, Medical care, Extra curricular activities, Arts and Performances. We run evening study classes to help them with their educational progress and bring in special tutors to help them in Math and English.

We nurture the holistic well being of the child and support the child to grow up into a person he or she deserves to be... Our Kids get medals in sports and produce an annual play every year. They travel with the play to many events and theatre festivals to perform. They retain their legacy of being performers and artists.

*We would like to place our immense gratitude to*



- **Wipro Cares Trust** for giving us our beautiful Green Campus at Sikkal!

- **Marc Sauquet Foundation**, Spain for their trust in us and their consistent support to us for the past 13 years!





## AFTER SCHOOL CENTRES



After the Vanavil School experiment we realised we have grasped knowledge and experience in educating the Nomadic communities and we wanted to spread out.

Vanavil Afterschool centres are located in 9 villages in Nagapattinam and Thiruvavarur districts where the Aadiyans and Narikuravars live. The Nomadic communities tend to have the habit of travelling to village festivals and other towns where the children either beg or sell wares.

The main purpose behind these after school centres is to keep the children in school by providing educational support, pitch into their nutritive intake and make them partners in child protection by making them aware about the hazards of begging and selling wares which are their customary practice.

Fighting malnutrition is a primary goal of the centres and we provide nutritious snacks to the kids daily and in the pandemic times have increased the size of the portion since the kids do not get their noon meals from the school.

The evening classes are conducted in the evenings. Two days are dedicated for Math and English. Saturday is to do extra curricular activities and we run reading programs and sports events to motivate the students. We run workshops on the evils of child sexual abuse, Child marriages and Child begging.

Our Arasur Afterschool Centre got a brand new building thanks to the Mannvasanai team from Bentonville, USA and their pongal fundraiser!





## VAASAL



Vaasal is our initiative to train young people for higher education entrance exams, graduates for Job exams and to guide young people into skill training. We are a free career guidance bureau in one of the most backward districts of India.

This year, we've created a wonderful resource that is geography-specific! 'Aduthu Enna padikalam?' (What to study next?), which has details of colleges and courses in and around Nagapattinam. The booklet was widely circulated and many college professors appreciated the effort.

We conducted career guidance programs in two remote government Schools. Vellapallam Higher Secondary School and Seruthur High Schools students met professors from a central university, Motivational speakers and principal of a skill training institute and discussed the possibilities of their future.



This year we hosted a conference which discussed the National Education Policy 2019 focusing on what it means to be educated in the light of the New Education Policy.

## HIGHER EDUCATION



Another stark feature of the dismal educational conditions of the Nomadic Communities is the fact that even if enrollment in the primary level is achieved hardly anyone gets into higher education. Lack of awareness, poverty, child labour and lack of guidance results in this. We decided that we will enable more and more graduates from the Nomadic Communities.



In 2019 we sent 11 kids from the Nomadic Communities to College. Lakshmanan, one of Vanavil's oldest students, joined the college of Fine arts to pursue a BFA in ceramic design. We surmounted unimaginable hurdles for Devi to join her dream course of nursing. Devi is one of the many nomadic children who do not possess a community certificate which is crucial for the college admissions of any underprivileged child in India. Despite significant efforts she was denied a community certificate but thanks to our donors we managed to send her to the prestigious M.A.Chidambaram College of Nursing in Taramani, Chennai. Other students are pursuing their courses in Arts and Science Colleges in Thiruvavur and Thiruthuraiipoondi.



## FINANCIALS

Vanavil Actual Financials FY19-20 1-Apr-2019 to 31-Mar-2020		Vanavil Budget Projection FY20-21 1-Apr-2020 to 31-Mar-2021	
Fund Raising		Fund Raising	
Funds Raised	₹81,12,431	Funds for Programme	₹77,50,00
Funds for Housing Program	₹40,00,000	Funds for Childline	₹17,46,000
<b>Total Inflow</b>	<b>₹121,12,431</b>	<b>Total Inflow</b>	<b>₹94,96,000</b>
Expenses		Expenses	
School	₹30,60,579	School	₹35,00,000
Childrens Home	₹12,39,235	Childrens Home	₹15,00,000
Outreach Centres	₹4,85,583	Outreach Centres	₹5,00,000
Vaasal Training Program	₹4,35,657	Vaasal Training Program	₹5,00,000
Higher Education	₹4,06,597	Higher Education	₹5,00,000
Administration	₹8,20,287	Administration	₹8,50,000
Farm	₹2,42,592	Farm	₹4,00,000
Childline**	₹1,89,740	Childline	₹17,46,000
Housing Program*	₹40,42,314		
<b>Total Outflow</b>	<b>₹109,22,584</b>	<b>Total Outflow</b>	<b>₹94,96,000</b>

\*Non-recurring expenses

\*\*Childline Project started in Feb 2020

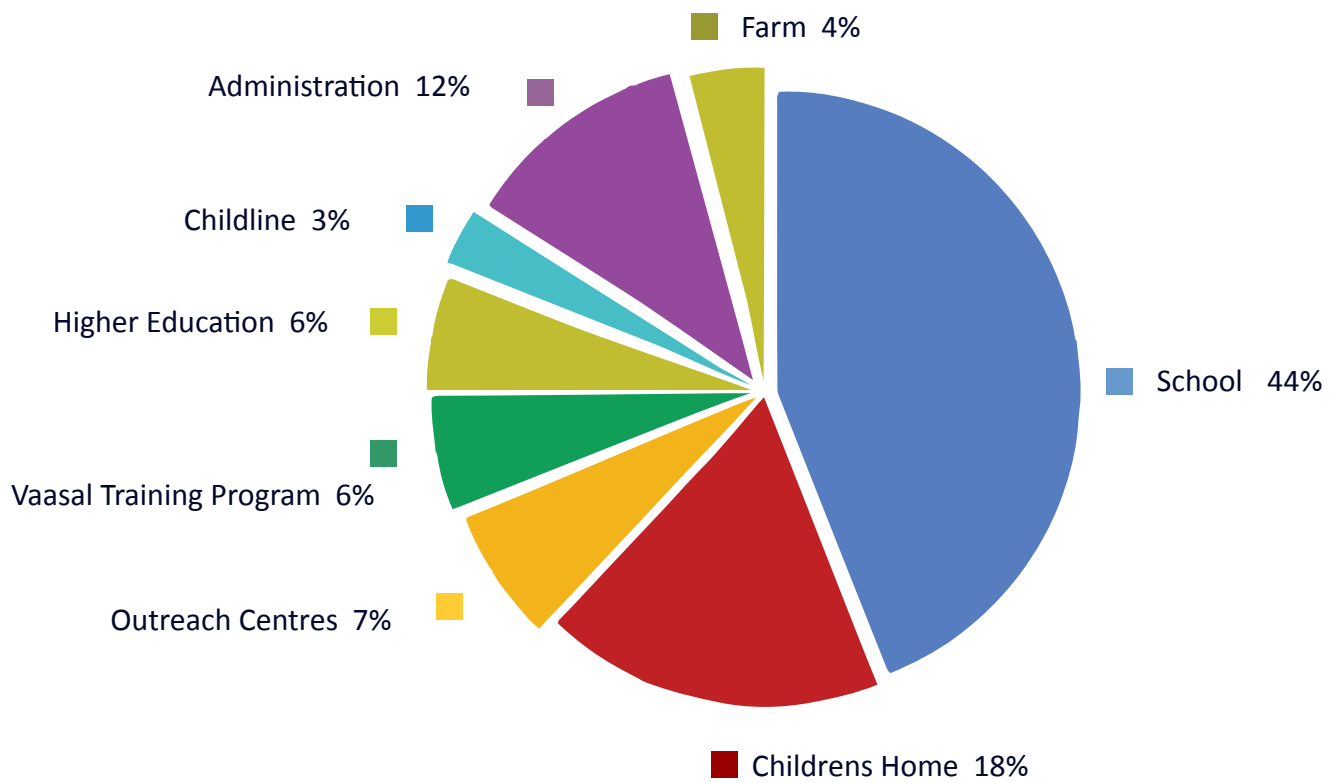
## BENEFICIARIES COUNT

Vanavil	86
Home & Hostel	102
After school	425
Vaasal	500
Housing	10
Covid19 Relief work	5255

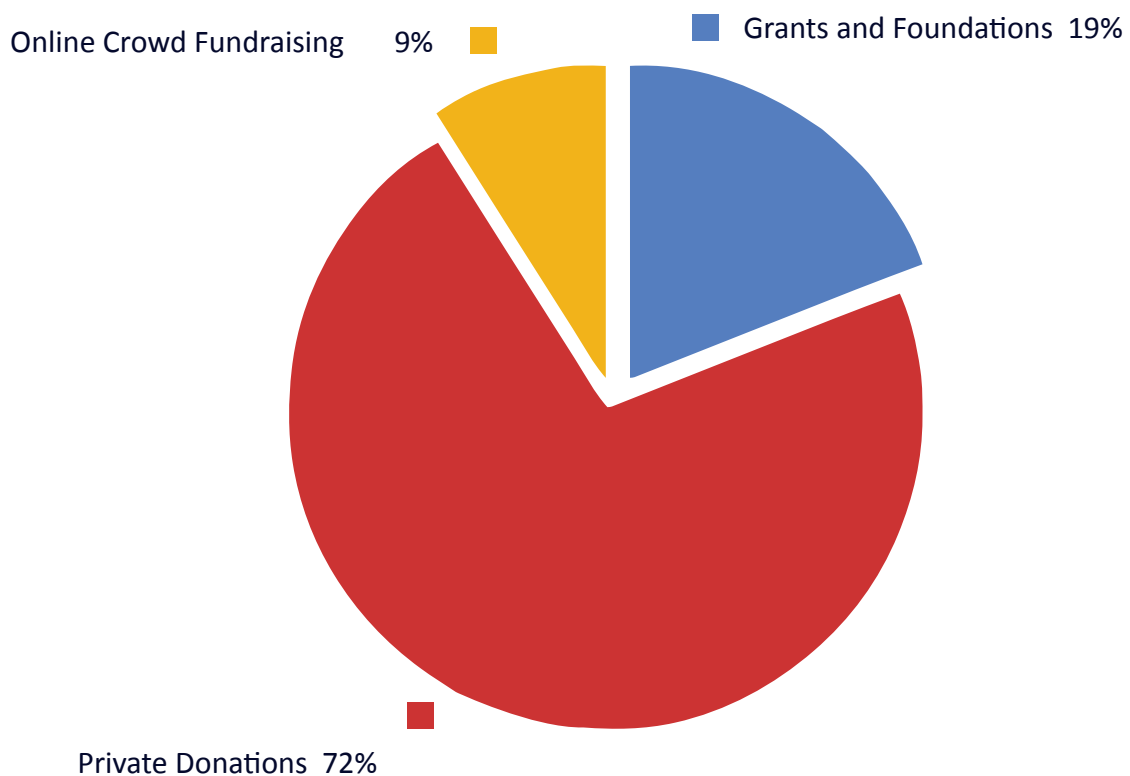




## WHERE THE MONEY GOES?



## WHO FUNDS US?



## WHAT THEY SAY

### **R. Ramanujam**

Professor

Institute of Mathematical Sciences

I have known of the work of Vanavil for many years, and greatly admire the deep commitment Revathi, and her colleagues have shown. Progressive education for children from the most marginalised sections of our society is not a matter of merely “providing appropriate educational resources”. It involves engaging with the reality of the children’s everyday lives and looking at knowledge from that perspective. Vanavil succeeds in bringing joy, confidence and optimism to children while engaging their minds and bodies in intellectual exploration. The school is a rich resource for everyone concerned about education as the empowerment of the rural poor.



### **Y.Subbarayalu**

Eminent Historian

The evening that I visited Vanavil offered me a new kind of experience. It reminded me of my visits to the community run schools inspired by the Sarvodaya Sangh in Madurai some fifteen years ago. Its not an ordinary feat to take up, shelter and educate children affected by natural disasters enabling them to become motivated citizens. In today’s times where education is seen as a commodity, what Vanavil is doing gains my immense respect. I wish more people would come forward and help the school by supporting them in ways they can. My congratulations and thanks to Revathi and team for continuing the good work of educating the children from marginalised communities.



### **Swarnavel Eswaran**

Film Maker, Professor

University of Iowa

Prema Revathi and her Vanavil School emblematises the spirit of resilience and perseverance. She came to Nagapattinam when the Tsunami struck in December 2004 and was also overwhelmed like many of us but decided to do something, even if it meant changing the entire course of her life. She shifted from Chennai with her mom, who helped her with her precious savings to Nagapattinam to start a school for the children of the Boom Boom Mattukarar community-a colourful but nomadic community on the fringes. Over the last 15 years, Vanavil has become a space for Narikuravar children as well and those in need of care. There is a lot I want to say about Revathi’s work, particularly, in securing Boom Boom





Maatukarar Adhiyan and Narikuravar communities identity documents, and basic amenities of housing, education, and (alternative) livelihood possibilities. Vanavil over the years has also extended the education programs to excluded communities who are out of the whole modern education project. Great poets have written about the miracle of the flower, of connecting with the seeds in your heart: Revathi's Vanavil is a miracle which unfolded in front of my eyes through sheer humane effort and the unwavering pursuit of its goals despite the challenges. You can also see the magic unfold if you visit Vanavil. My heartfelt thanks to Revathi and her team for their commitment and compassion



**Rashmi Paliwal**  
Educationist  
Ekalavya, Hoshangabad

Vanavil according to me is the atmosphere all children should have a right to. The physical and psychological space surrounding them was strongly supportive and stimulating. They now belonged to a new and dynamic community of caregivers and learners, and themselves took charge of many responsibilities and chores. They re-examined their lives and re-imagined them too. I loved the slide made along the staircase in the hostel and will remember forever the exuberance and ease with which two little girls went up and down the slide to show me it really works for them! I was captivated by the drama rehearsal going on in a room full of boys and girls, who watched their team prepare for a show to be held in some other town. The absorption, authenticity and intensity were electrifying, their spirit and confidence were amazing. "This is it", I had felt - what educational goals have to achieve- is it not? I remember with satisfaction the tangy meal we had with vatha kulambu and rice cooked in a well-maintained kitchen, served out in an organised manner, and eaten in a charming open-air verandah with proper seating facilities. The children tried talking to me, we struggled to get over our language barriers, forming bonds of the heart and mind that linger when the words are forgotten.

## RAILWAY CHILDLINE NAGAPATTINAM



Our commitment to Child Protection which started with our efforts to stop nomadic children from begging has become a larger mandate with our work against child labour, prevention of child marriages and nurturing the girl child. We are now chosen as a partner by the Childline India Foundation to run the Child Help Desk at the Nagapattinam Railway Station as the collaborative organisation for the Railway Childline Project of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.



## HOUSING FOR SINGLE WOMEN



The devastating Gaja Cyclone of 2018 November raced a large portion of our beloved Nagapattinam district to the ground and the worst affected were the Dalits and Indigenous communities of the area. Vanavil rose to the challenge and reached out extensive Relief packages to more than 6000 families. One of the most disturbing features of the Gaja ravage on the Vedaranyam - Thalaigayiru area is the complete destruction of houses of thousands of people. In 2019 thanks to our long term patron Mr.N. Subramanian and his friends Shivakumar and Rajiv we were able to build ten proper houses for single women and differently-abled women. Most of the families had children in school and the happiness that the new, strong and stable roof brought to their faces was a memorable sight. We intend to continue building more houses for single women and differently-abled women in the Nomadic hamlets where most of them live in tiny thatch sheds or tents.



Just ahead of the next monsoon, on 27th November 2019, the new houses were handed to the women by Mr O.S.Maniyan, Tamil Nadu Government's Handlooms and Textile Minister along with Mr Praveen P Nair, District Collector.





# COVID-19 RELIEF

## Vanavil stands with Nomadic Communities



Vanavil became the epicentre of help for the nomadic communities in Tamil Nadu during the sudden lockdown forced by the COVID19 pandemic. Operating from a small village in Nagapattinam district we've responded to the hungry calls of Nomadic communities from all over the state - Madurai to Villupuram to Erode.

Thanks to our generous donors and supporters we were able to provide food relief support to the Boom Boom Maatukarar, Narikuravar and few other nomadic communities. They are traditional Nomads having settled in a variety of settlements sometimes by the government and in banks of rivers and other water bodies. Most of them do not have proper social security markers like the community certificate even though they fall in the category of scheduled tribes as per constitutional norms.

They are indulging in livelihood activities that still have a hold of their nomadic history. While the Narikuravars are minor hunters and peddlers of beads the Boom Boom Maatukarars are into making and selling Thirusti Bommai (totems to ward off the evil eye), selling plastic wares and street performances. In many villages, they also resort to begging as a cultural practice and pushed by the near lack of livelihood options. Most women and children in this community resort to begging at sites of worship, festivals & fairs, bus stations and market places.



## ALSO PRECARIOUS

We served the migrant labourers from Jharkhand, UP, MP and Kerala who were stuck in Nagapattinam and Tiruvarur districts. We reached out to Trans-persons, Elderly and single Women, Conservancy workers. We reached support to families of children in need of care and support.

We would like to thank Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, Cognizant Outreach, San Francisco Bay Area Tamil Mandram, Ms Usha and 300+ individual donors who helped us to reach out 5255 kits of dry rations to the Vulnerable Families.



## AT THE VILLAGES



Schools were shut to counter the Corona Virus but our teachers followed our wards to the village to give them awareness about the safety and the sanitation protocols. We made handwashing a fun activity. We held meetings with the parents and insisted on the physical distancing and hygiene aspects. We realised Hunger to be the worst issue on hand and distributed Food materials to them three times.



We got all our children an art and writing kit and held art competitions. We sent them stories and songs so that singing and making art will ease their Corona tensions.



We organised two hours of activities at the village every day for the Vanavil School kids roping in our elder children from the same village as education volunteers. Vanavil Teachers made videos of songs and lessons for the children and kept in touch with their students through WhatsApp and phone calls. The Community lacks devices and bandwidth is a major issue in our region so we worked within these limitations and our teachers geared up to the new challenge brilliantly!



From July a section of our teachers have been going to the village to run English, Math and thematic project classes. We are providing a healthy snack for the children at 11 am and have provided them with storybooks.

## BEING AT THE RAINBOW



The home students were sent back to their homes as per the government guidelines. Some of our children unable to go back home stayed back with us. The wardens and some teachers are stayed at the children's home. In order to counter the isolation and fear of the Pandemic, the home kids did some interesting activities that were also a great example of learning by doing.



The children built a happy playhouse with a thatch roof all by themselves from scratch. They made cloth masks, Papercrafts and drew pictures.



The kids we sent home started calling us asking to come back and from June we've been taking them in small batches with proper screening and quarantine process. Now we are running online classes in Fun Mathematics for the middle schoolers and English and Math for the tenth kids with the support of CLE Trust, Bangalore.





## LIVELIHOOD



In 2019-20 we have moved towards looking at alternate livelihood options for the Nomadic Communities as another integral part of the education project. 15 years of working with the nomadic communities have shown us that the health and nutrition of the child and the livelihood stability of the family are very crucial for the Nomads Education Project. Added to this are the Community level awareness and advocacy work to obtain identity documents and their fair share of



Government welfare schemes. We are working on building Micro credit projects for their existing small businesses and creating alternate livelihoods for the Nomadic Women.

## VOLUNTEER WITH VANAVAL

We had many volunteers join hands with us this year who helped us out in various functions of Vanavil which includes teaching kids at school after school hours, poster design for online campaigning and fundraising, moderating our social media pages, teaching English to our students who are in college, writing proposals, etc. We would like to take a moment and thank all our volunteers who helped us stay afloat during this pandemic. Below are few of our incredible volunteers who helped and are helping us this year.



Mariam, a graduate student from FLAME University, Pune volunteered to do her internship with us by teaching English to our elder kids who are in college. Senthil, a designer from Bangalore helped us with posters for fundraising online during the early days of pandemic. Nivetha, a marketing associate volunteered to regulate and manage our social media accounts. We also have a group of students from Stella Marris College who are developing video lessons to teach English to the students of Vanavil. Athmika and Malavika volunteered to write proposals for Vanavil School and After School Centres. Athmika raised funds for our higher Education fundraiser as well. Vinoth, a Phd scholar from CUTN, and Sundara Pandian, a government school teacher from Tiruvarur are volunteering by teaching Maths to the kids who stay at the Vanavil Home. Rahul Pandey and his colleagues from Centre for Learning and Empowerment Trust, Bangalore are helping our kids by teaching English and Math classes online.



# MEDIA MENTIONS



## Pandemic Relief Work

Vanavil became the centre for nutrition and support when the lockdown was imposed to control the pandemic for 1000's of nomadic tribe families all over Tamil Nadu. Read the article on People's Archive of Rural India (PARI)



Read this detailed article in edex live which talks about the journey of our director and the story of Vanavil.



Vanavil got mentioned in Vikatan magazine for the pandemic relief work we did to support the nomadic tribal people in need.



Conversations today which is a journal about NGOs and social enterprises featured Vanavil in their January 2020 issue. Read the article by clicking on the below link to know about how vanavil convinced the community to send their children to school and the challenges we faced along the way to become what we are now.



Vanavil has been featured on Times Of India for the work we have done with the Nomadic Communities for their education and relief work during the COVID19 pandemic



Vanavil constructed houses for ten single and disabled women in and around Nagapattinam after the cyclone Gaja destroyed their homes.



## FUNDRAISING

In our fifteenth year, Vanavil had the biggest year in terms of funds raised. For the first time, we crossed the magical number of Rs. 1 crore. That enabled us to widen our net of beneficiaries and make bigger and better impact.

We had a stellar year, thanks to a large grant of Rs. 40 lakhs towards the rehabilitation project for single women affected by Gaja floods. It was made possible by generous donations from our ardent supporters Mr. Subramanian, Me. Shivkumar and Mr. Rajiv.

We are beginning to focus our energies on securing more grants from corporates and foundations. In addition to our regular supporters Marc Saquet Foundation, United Way Chennai, Battle of Buffet Grant, we secured first time grants from Sundaram Asset Management Company Limited and Eureka Child Foundation.

Online fundraising has become an integral part of our campaigns. The platforms have opened up opportunities for our supporters to make a difference from anywhere in the world. The targeted campaigns continued to receive incredible support from a broad range of individuals

- Back To School via DONATEKart: 2531 products for school use from 46 donors.

- Deepavali Celebrations via Milaap: Rs. 2.64 lacs from 69 donors.

Our heartfelt thanks to the donors and the executives at all these companies who have helped to ensure that the campaigns are successful. In FY 2019-20, online fundraising accounted for a total of Rs. 11.11 lacs.

LetzChange (acquired by GiveIndia), a not for profit online fundraising platform, has been the backbone to our online fundraising campaigns. We seek the support of each and every one. Please search for Vanavil at [www.fundraisers.giveindia.org](http://www.fundraisers.giveindia.org) and consider donating to the upliftment of the marginalised.



# DONATE

Reach us on [team@vanavil.org](mailto:team@vanavil.org)

click donate button on [www.facebook.com/vanavil](https://www.facebook.com/vanavil)

click donate button on [www.vanavil.org](http://www.vanavil.org)

You can also raise funds for us by running campaigns on Milaap, GiveIndia and Facebook.

Vanavil is a registered Public Charitable Trust (No: 81 / 2005). Vanavil's tax exempt 80(G) registration No: 7162E (103) / 07-08. Your donations are tax deductible in India.

# 15 YEARS OF VANAVIL



Vanavil was started in May 2005 to wean children from Nomadic communities off begging and to give them holistic education and protection! We see our growth and impact over the years in the words of two of our eldest girl students at Vanavil

*"We were living in MGR Nagar when Tsunami hit Nagapattinam that's when Revathi Akka (sister) met us and started this school for us. We had no access to school before that. Studying at Vanavil has made a great impact on our lives. We never call Vanavil as a school, it was like a second home for us where all the teachers were our friends. Akka made this place a happy one by not restricting us and giving us all the freedom be it in education or sports, we never wanted to leave the school and go home, we always wanted to be at school. After I finished my schooling, my wish was to pursue engineering. I got admission in Anna University, Thirukkuvalai and joined the Electronics and Communication department. I managed to get past all the hurdles and graduated. I am now working in a reputed IT firm. Few of us have come this far because of the education we got and I believe education is the only tool that can bring about change in our lives. I want all the people of Boom Boom Maatukarar community to get educated which I believe will bring about a change in their life."* **-P.Sudha** is one of the first students of Vanavil. She works in an IT company now.



*"We came to Vanavil after the tsunami and it became our home. I was sent to a different school after my elementary education in Vanavil, it was difficult to fit and I found it challenging to adapt to the situation. Vanavil and Akka encouraged and supported me to pursue my education. I was the first graduate in my village, not only that I was the first person to finish 10th and 12th too. When I went to college it was scary to look at the tall buildings and the huge number of people there, I had seen colleges only in movies till then. With encouragement from people in Vanavil, I was able to become the first graduate of our community. In our Boom Boom Maatukarar community, only a few people continue their education most of them drop out because of various reasons. I want everyone in our community to study and come out of poverty. Currently, I am doing a Montessori course, my wish is to complete the course, start working and travel the world."*

**-M. Lakshmi**, who is now pursuing her Montessori course in Chennai is the first graduate of Vanavil.

