

18TH | ANNUAL REPORT




18TH ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023

**METAMORPHOSIS IN MOTION:
UNVEILING A YEAR OF CHANGE & IMPACT**



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OUR VISION- The Nomadic Tribes attain Equality, Identity and Dignity.

About Vanavil

OUR MISSION- To ensure equality and dignity for nomadic communities by working for their protection, development and well-being in Tamil Nadu through Education, Livelihood, Advocacy, Health and Nutrition.

Vanavil Trust (<http://www.vanavil.org>) was started in 2005 in the aftermath of the Asian Tsunami of 2004 to support children of two Nomadic communities, Boom Boom Mattukarars and Narikuravars, in Tamil Nadu. After 18 years of working with the communities, Vanavil has now grown into an organisation with multiple projects that are aimed to support the education of the children from the nomadic tribal communities. Vanavil stands for:

Education

Child Protection

Health & Nutrition

Livelihood

1. Vanavil Nursery & Primary School

Supporting children from extremely marginalised communities with a customized curriculum and arts and performance-based Pedagogy

2. Vanavil Children's Home

A home and a safe space for nomadic Girls and young boys who are at risk of early marriage and begging

3. Vanavil After School Centres

After School centres in 12 Nomadic Hamlets reaching supplementary education and Nutrition to 750+ Children

4. Higher Education Scholarship

Providing higher education scholarships to Nomadic Community youngsters who are the first in their community to reach college

5. Livelihood for Nomadic Women

Rehabilitating 500+ women from Nomadic communities from begging through creating alternative income generation possibilities

Our Impact

Overall Impact



495

Children educated
in our school



541

Children provided
care & protection in
our home



104

First-generation
college graduates



15000

Families provided
with relief materials



1000+

Children provided
educational &
nutritional support



466

Women provided
livelihood support

Impact 2022-2023

196
Protection from
begging & child
marriages



850
Access to quality education



39
Higher education

86
Livelihoods/Skill
Training



200
Healthcare &
daily nutrition

2830
Awareness &
advocacy





Founder's Note

“On the wings of transformative change, we've bloomed in myriad ways this past year—numerically, in-depth, in shape, and in scale.”

MeTaMorPhoSis

The year 2022-23 has proven to be a fantastically productive period for Vanavil. Progressing steadfastly with our strategic plan for 2023-2025, I'm thrilled to announce that we've already achieved our strategic goals in quantifiable terms. Presently, our focus is on enhancing design, delivery, documentation, and evaluation processes.

Our commitment to providing quality education, spanning from kindergarten to college, extends to the children of Nomadic Tribes. Introducing teacher-led thematic pedagogy in our school, FLN (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy), and instilling a love for reading in our afterschool students through community libraries, we're proud to share that we've surpassed the 100-mark milestone in our Higher education Scholarship. Vanavil presently supports 125 Nomadic students in colleges pursuing degrees.

In our relentless pursuit of child protection from the perils of begging, labor, and early marriage, we've remained vigilant, reported impending child marriages, and reintegrated long absentees back into the school system. Over the next two years, our plan includes involving other stakeholders and raising awareness against child begging.

Launching in 2023, our Golden Baby Project addresses hunger and combats malnutrition at a crucial juncture. This transformative initiative is shaped by collaborations with the government and stakeholders, spotlighting Vanavil's work for

Nomadic tribes.

Despite gaining numerous donors and supporters this year, our metamorphosis from a small organization in two rural districts to a collaborative force with the state and other entities has been resilient. This transformation empowers us to extend development to more individuals from Nomadic tribes in Tamil Nadu.

As we evolve into thought leaders, advocacy collaborators, and scale to reach more people, I express my gratitude to our excellent and committed team and donors. Their trust and patience during our metamorphosis were pivotal. Welcoming our alumni to the team and integrating them into the Vanavil Board reflect internal transformations. Leveraging technology and embarking on planned team capacity building mark our new direction.

In conclusion, I emphasize that we prioritize the well-being of our team as much as the communities we serve. As a leader committed to mental well-being, I advocate for awareness within the development sector. Let's strive for a better world, reinforcing reciprocity with our community and the Earth—the tendril connecting all of our endeavours.

Revathi R
Founder | Vanavil

Testimonials



Mr Johny Tom Varghese I.A.S, District Collector, Nagapattinam

I am happy to know that Vanavil Trust works with the Nomadic Tribal communities who are often left behind. When I visited Vanavil, I noticed the trust and relationship between the community members, children and the organisation -I am sure it has taken a lot of work, learning and understanding of the community by the members of Vanavil to reach this stage. It is also noteworthy that the lifestyle of the nomadic communities and their culture have value, respect and has been given importance in the school run by Vanavil Trust.

Vanavil Trust has made substantial impact by supporting the education and nutrition of over 1000 nomadic tribal children and higher education of more than 150 first generation graduates from Nomadic Tribal

Communities. The Vanavil team deserves appreciation for working among the most marginalised communities and ensuring that they get education, nutrition and livelihood opportunities.



Having had the privilege of witnessing the impactful work of Vanavil Trust, I am moved to acknowledge the profound connection they have forged with nomadic tribal communities. The depth of understanding and respect displayed by the Vanavil team towards the unique lifestyle and culture of these communities is truly commendable.

Vanavil Trust's commitment to providing education, nutrition, and livelihood opportunities reflects a holistic approach that goes beyond immediate needs.

The organization stands as a beacon of empowerment, working tirelessly to ensure that nomadic tribals are not only supported in their present challenges but are also equipped for a brighter, more self-sufficient future.

My sincere appreciation goes out to the entire Vanavil team for their dedication to serving some of the most marginalized communities, fostering a positive impact that resonates beyond the surface.



Mr. S. Kailash ,Senior Manager, HR & GA, KOMATSU India Ltd

I'm so happy to be here at Vanavil for the second time. It's always refreshing to see the happy children. The best thing about Vanavil is how the children are friendly, warm, and always open to interaction. We are here again because children like these and places like Vanavil should be supported. We learned that remote rural geographies don't attract enough donors, and that's why we decided to support and continue in this journey. We hope to see Vanavil also develop into a livelihoods hub for the mothers of these children, which I believe will be the best-supporting activity Vanavil can do so that these children continue their education at Colleges and into good vocations.





Our Work

Vanavil Nursery & Primary School

Overview :

Vanavil School weans children from nomadic communities from begging practice and runs KG to the Fifth standard. Our care for these children is comprehensive. It covers education, health and well-being. We have a child-centered educational environment using Montessori methods and Technology-aided activities. Our arts and performance-based pedagogy recognises the strengths of all our students and works with the values of freedom, equality and fraternity. We provide three meals a day (Breakfast, Lunch and Evening Snacks with milk) and monitor the health of our students, from ordinary ailments to serious chronic issues.

Students Enrolled in 2023 : 120

Mr. Ramesh Sundaresan, a dedicated member of our board, has taken the initiative to lead the teacher education program at Vanavil. Collaborating with Ms. Revathi from Vanavil, Mr. Senthil from Marudham School, and experts Mrs. Thenmozhi, Dr. Latha, and Mrs. Bama from CLE, valuable sessions were conducted on Classroom Management Skills, as well as creative and enjoyable teaching approaches for Math, English, Science, and Social Sciences.

Library gets a Redo. :

Thanks to the Bookworm Library and the Intro to Library course supported by Wipro Foundation the Vanavil Library has metamorphosed into the most loved and welcoming space of the campus. Children quiet and absorbed in books or echoing a Read aloud session and discussing books is a everyday sight now. Our special thanks to Shankar Narayanan Memorial Library and Dr.Shiva for their forever support.

Sellur

STUDENT

RANJITH

Vanavil Nursery
&
Primary School



My name is Ranjith, born in Sellur, I am studying in class V. I have three brothers. One of my brothers stays at home as a special child. He studied in our Vanavil School till the fourth standard. Then he stays at home because he cannot sit and play with other children at school. He is given nutrition through evening classes. Both my father and mother take care of us by carrying old plastic in a pushcart and using the income from it. My father is an alcoholic.

My brothers and I joined Vanavil School when we were unable to study due to lack of proper income. Vanavil School provides us with safe, nutritious food and a free learning environment. Before, I didn't come to school very often. In the classroom, I tend to be a little more mischievous. Life education inspired me a lot. Besides that, I liked to take myself to the garden and take care of the plants and water them.

I really like that the teachers teach arithmetic through activities in the class every day. I'll be the first to raise my hand and answer that.

That was what motivated me to study and come to school. I like going to the library. The books there are easy for me to read and understand.





Sellur

RESIDENT

VIJAYALAKSHMI

Vanavil
Homes

Children's Home

Overview :

Vanavil runs a children's home for Nomadic girls and young boys. The home helps kids who are homeless as well as kids whose parents are semi-nomadic. We provide them with safe shelter, Education, Health and Nutrition.

Number of Children provided care & protection - 50

My name is Vijayalakshmi, and I come from Sellur. My father is involved in the toy trade, while my mother, Murugammal, deals with plastics. I have two brothers and one sister, and my younger brother and sister are also residents of Vanavil Home. Since the first grade, I have been studying at Vanavil Home. My siblings are also enrolled at Vanavil School. Due to our family's circumstances, we had to sell our house in Arasur and now reside in Sellur. Initially, my Tamil reading skills were quite weak. However, with the guidance of the teachers at Vanavil School and the special classes provided at Vanavil Home, I learned the

Tamil alphabets. Now I am capable of reading library books independently.

I have a strong interest in reading books and telling stories. Additionally, I have a keen interest in running. I have actively participated in school competitions, and my aspiration is to compete in events held outside of my city. I am determined to develop my skills to a level where I can partake in competitions outside of my local area. Furthermore, I am committed to studying diligently, becoming proficient and inspiring teacher in the future.



After - School Centres

Overview :

Vanavil runs 12 after-school centres for children from nomadic communities in the TN Delta districts. These centres are set up in each village in the available spaces. In some places, temporary structures are erected by Vanavil. Daily classes take place between 5-7 on weekdays and Saturdays.

Number of Beneficiaries in 2022 - 2023 : 750



Identify & start
a community learning
centre



Activity based
learning activated



Evening class
& nutrition



Mannainagar

STUDENT

PRIYA

After School
Centre

I'm Priya, and I used to go to a school near Mannainagar Railway Station. From first to seventh grade, I attended this local school. In 2021, I finished seventh grade, but I took a break from school in 2022 and missed a year. My sister also had to stop studying in eighth grade because she had trouble hearing and speaking. My mom has problems with her vision. My dad sells balloons, and he's the one taking care of our family's needs. When I was at this school, I felt a bit lonely because my classmates didn't really talk to me. The teachers didn't talk to me much either, and that made me not want to go to school. I was the only one from my town in eighth grade that year, so I didn't have many friends. Reading was hard for me, so I didn't like school even more. The school was mostly for kids who were really good at studying, and I didn't feel like I fit in. So, I didn't go to school for a whole year.

But I didn't give up on learning. I went to Vanavil After School Centre, where they taught a lot of things and evening snacks were also provided, and I got better at them. My teacher, Manimaran, promised that I could go back to school when I got better. He was very patient, and this is where I got

the confidence that I could also learn and understand concepts like any other child.

The school in my village only had classes up to the eighth grade, so I had to find a different school for the ninth grade. The schools that had ninth grade were far from where I live, and that worried my family. It wasn't easy to convince my father, but Manimaran sir spoke to my parents and convinced them. Vanavil was the first school to trust me and my potential. Even though it was hard, I really wanted to keep learning, so I kept asking my dad. This year, I started ninth grade at a School in Mannargudi. It's far away, and I have to walk a long way every day—about one and a half kilometers. Sometimes I feel alone, but my teachers at this new school help me when I don't understand something.

My parents used to travel, and I went with them. But now that I'm in school, I have to stay home with my sister when they go. My dad still isn't completely sure about this, but I'm determined to keep going to school and use the chances I have. Life has its difficulties, but I'm trying my best to learn and make the most of the good things that come my way.



Monitoring Visit



Counseling



Students love us :

A remarkable 95% of students attending our evening classes in both Classes 10 and 12 achieved a passing grade.

Team expansion :

We welcomed seven new teachers to our After school centers, enriching the learning experience for our students.

Keeping them in Schools :

In Mannai Nagar and Arasur, we successfully re-enrolled 10 school dropout students, providing them with an opportunity to continue their education. The 12th Vanavil Centre for narikuravar children: On December 5, 2022, we established a new evening center in Thiruthuraipoondi circle, Tiruvarur district, under the banner of Veeranagar. The inauguration of the Veeranagar Center took place on February 10, 2023.



Annual Day Celebration



Meeting with school to readmit , track attendance



Higher Education

Overview :

Vanavil supports the education of first-generation college-goers from nomadic tribal communities all over Tamil Nadu. We ensure that all the students who complete higher secondary education continue their studies till they finish the undergraduate education of their choice and interest. We organise meetings once a quarter in which they will be taught a skill, interact with students who completed their higher education and pursuing jobs in the city and attend sessions on self-development, goal setting, etc, conducted by experts from the field.

Number of Students Enrolled in 2023 : 39

Existing students : 65

I'm Anjammal, born in Kullanchavadi, a village in Cuddalore district. I have 7 siblings and I'm the 5th child to my parents. I come from the 'Boom Boom Maatukarar' community. We live in small quarters built in the MGR period. During the rainy season, water seeps out of the wall, so we sleep at the nearby 'mandapam'. I studied at a Government school. It wasn't easy for the others to see us among them; they either fear coming closer or they bully us. Strangely, both did not affect me much. I simply did not care; I knew I had to score good marks or I'd be stopped from going to school. I was lucky to have teachers who encouraged me and chose to see my strengths.

After my classes, I sold flowers in the market, and I earned Rs 150 a day. One day, I was told that 'Vanavil' teachers had come to my village, asking for the names of children who had completed 12th grade. Vardini Akka asked me, 'What do you dream to be in the future?' I was not prepared for that question. No one had asked me this before, and that was the first time I revealed my little secret to her in a broken voice. 'I want to be a doctor but I scored only 75%, so I applied for Zoology in the local college.' She told me that I can still be a healthcare professional if I choose the right course, and I was asked to come to Vanavil School the following week. Honestly, I did



Vadalur

STUDENT

ANJAMMAL

Higher
Education

not believe her words because I did not see any possibility for that. Asking my parents to support my higher studies or moving out of my village was simply out of the question.

However, I went to 'Vanavil' school, and I couldn't believe that someone has been working for 'my community' for so many years! Why would anyone take us seriously? I couldn't believe someone had pinned their hopes on us! I couldn't believe someone thought that we also deserved a dignified life! Everything was new to me. I was overwhelmed with joy to see 'enga pasanga', there were also Annas and Akkas from our community who had already graduated. I was thrilled to listen to their stories.

In the middle of the meeting, Vardini Akka got a call, and she announced, "Anjammal got a seat for the 'Physician Assistant' course at Chennai College." Before I could process what she said, there was a loud round of applause, and everybody was cheering up for me. For the first time, I felt hope, a sense of belonging, and a support system to lean on. Most importantly, I knew it wasn't a personal success, and none of

our accomplishments are personal, because my victory is the victory of the community itself. I'm carrying the dreams of all the women and children in my community. It was a day of celebration for all of us. I'll be the first graduate, the first woman graduate in my family, and I have taken the first step toward breaking the generational cycle of oppression in my family.

I do not conceal my identity from anyone; I refuse to bear the brunt of fictional fear-mongering over our community. I tell my journey with a sense of pride. I'm glad I have come this far. I'm not afraid to dream now; Vanavil has given me and many children the joy of having dreams. I dream to do a master's degree, working in Chennai, getting trained to the fullest, and going back to my village and serve my people. I dream of building a house for my parents. And I wait for that big day - my turn to share my journey with my brothers and sisters at Vanavil's meeting and inspire them to take a step forward.



Neelapadi

PARVATHI

Livelihood

I'm Parvathi, and I come from Neelapadi village.

My husband and I make a living by selling plastic, and we are blessed with five children. My journey with the Vanavil Livelihood Program began when a friend from the same village introduced me to it. They extended a helping hand by providing me with a 10,000 rupees interest-free loan.

This financial support has been a game-changer for me. Instead of grappling with high-interest loans that used to consume a significant portion of my hard-earned income, I now pay back a manageable amount of 1,000 rupees each month.

Overview :

Through our livelihood program, we provide skill training and interest-free loans for nomadic tribal women who are willing to come out of begging and start their small businesses. Through this program, we have provided tailoring training, formed and provided interest-free loans to 2 SHGs and 1 women tailoring batch.

This shift has relieved me of the constant burden of repayment, allowing me to focus on building a better future for my family.

In the past, the cycle of borrowing at exorbitant interest rates left me with meager savings, making it difficult to fulfill even the basic needs of my children. Now, for the first time, I can save money, and the weight of financial pressure has lifted. It brings me immense satisfaction to know that my efforts are not just servicing interest but are contributing to a more secure and prosperous future for my family. I am optimistic that I will be able to repay the loan on time while still making a profit.

Number of Beneficiaries: 86

Srivanjiyam

STUDENT

KATHIRESAN

Community
Based Child
Protection



Kathiresan, who is 11 years old, lives in Thiruvandiyam village, Thiruvallur district. His parents are Raju and Maari, and he has two sisters and one brother. Kathiresan is the youngest in the family. He is currently in 6th grade at Kadampadi Middle School in Nagapattinam.

Due to financial difficulties and high debts, Kathiresan's family had to sell their house and business last year. This situation raised concerns about the education of Kathiresan and his brother. To ensure Kathiresan can continue his studies, Vanavil has supported him by enrolling him in the Aadi Dravidar Hostel.

Despite facing challenges, Kathiresan is very interested in school and has not missed a single day. Although he learns well, he struggles with writing, so he has recently joined an after-school center to improve his writing skills.

In addition to his studies, Kathiresan enjoys playing cricket and badminton. His dream is to someday build a house of his own. Despite the hardships, he remains determined to pursue his education and achieve his goals.



Nutrition Assistance



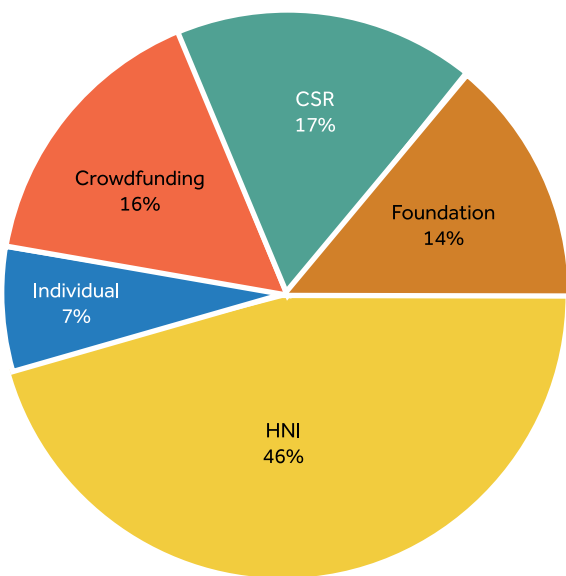
Health Camp

Financials

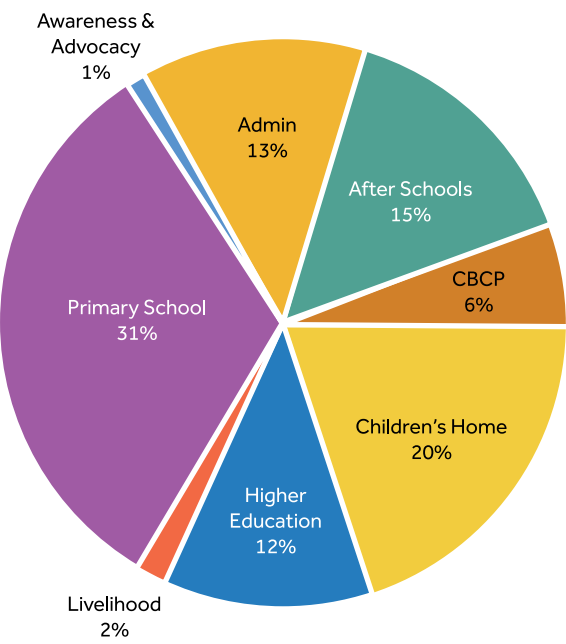
Vasavi Trust Income and Expenditure Statement for the Year ended 31-03-2023					
Expenditure	For the year ended 31-03-2023		Income	For the year ended 31-03-2023	
	Rs.	Rs.		Rs.	Rs.
Administration	19,86,438	1,54,81,043	Donations and Contributions	1,18,58,806	1,48,09,806
School	44,14,494		Donations		
Child Protection and Care	37,93,208		Charitable Contribution		
After School Centres	20,82,748		Other Income		3,22,188
Nomadic Higher Education Scholarship	17,54,367		Interest from PG	1,71,562	
Nomadic Employment	3,25,718		Interest from SB	813	
Research & Advocacy	80,581				
Childline	5,80,539				
			Excess of Expenditure over Income		9,92,137
Depreciation	5,81,965				
Total	1,18,93,008		Total	1,18,93,008	
As per our report of even dated For Kumar & Raj Chartered Accountants					
Ravi Kumar Managing Director			V. Kumar Partner		
Date: 08/04/2023			Place: Chennai		

Vasavi Trust Balance Sheet as at 31-03-2023					
Liabilities	As at 31-Mar-2023		Assets	As at 31-Mar-2023	
	Rs.	Rs.		Rs.	Rs.
Capital Account		28,81,000	Fixed Assets (Net)		89,42,678
Corpus Fund	1,000		Land/Agricultural Development	87,581	
Endowment Fund	17,30,000		Building	26,95,157	
Mr. Sankar			Computer	1,40,565	
Mr. Sankar Singh			Cycles	45,306	
Other Funds			Electrical Fittings	78,398	
Patron's Fund	3,00,000		Equipments	1,10,826	
Patron's Fund			Furniture & Fixings	5,67,157	
Patron's Fund			Gravelly & Core Shell	3,83,228	
Patron's Fund			Kitchen Home	1,60,824	
Patron's Fund			Two Whistles	84,769	
Patron's Fund			Washing Machine	17,223	
Patron's Fund			Car	1,84,637	
Accumulated Surplus		89,42,678	Current Assets		34,01,498
Opening Balance	18,54,718		Deposits		
Current Period	(8,83,807)		Fixed Deposit	25,01,000	
Current Period			Other Current Assets	53,152	
Current Period			Trip/Travel Expense	3,380	
Current Period			Interest & Advances		
Current Period			Rental Advance	3,02,099	
Current Period			Interest on Investment		
Current Period			Cash-in-Hand	701	
Current Period			Bank Accounts	4,84,454	
Current Period			Accrued Interest	44,758	
Total	89,42,678		Total	89,42,678	
As per our report of even dated For Kumar & Raj Chartered Accountants					
Ravi Kumar Managing Director			V. Kumar Partner		
Date: 08/04/2023			Place: Chennai		

Donations



Project Expenses



We're 18

Retracing the Vanavil Journey

Listen to what some of the people who were witness to the first year of Vanavil. The unadulterated hope and the terror, tenacity and beauty that belongs to any beginning.

**Usha
Ramanathan**

Legal Researcher,
Jurisprudence Expert

People lost so much in the tsunami - lives, relationships, community, and opportunity. What I saw at Vanavil, even before it became Vanavil in its early years, was the wisdom to know that there was one sure way to meet such a scale and depth of disaster and

despair, and that was with compassion. Since then, we have seen hope, belongingness, and, increasingly, achievement become those that mark Vanavil. It makes you feel that being human has meaning and worth.

Was a Phd student in
2005, Now lives in Delhi

Payal

I was in Nagapattinam with Revathi, visiting the nomadic tribes, when she shared her vision of starting a school for the children. Instantly, I knew it would be a special place. These past 18 years, I have seen Vanavil stay true

to its mission of providing world class education to children. with their growth, well-being and future at the center. I can hardly wait to see what Vanavil and the children accomplish next.

Balasubramanian

Was our Handy man in 2005, Can fix anything. Works in BHEL,

I vividly remember the period when Revathi rented a house to provide education to Boom Boom Maatukarar children. It was a chaotic situation; many teachers came and went quickly. Revathi tirelessly made trips to various offices to secure certificates for these children. We had limited financial resources, but somehow she managed to keep things going.

Bringing these children together proved to be a challenging task, and I was uncertain about the direction of

this initiative. However, I distinctly remember the inaugural cultural festival held in Bangalore, where these children experienced performing on stage for the first time. Jothimani and Balaji Sakthivel graced the event as chief guests. The confidence and talent that these children exhibited instilled a profound sense of hope within me. On that day, I truly believed in the potential of these children to make a significant impact someday. Now, 18 years later, it is incredibly heartwarming to witness these children successfully entering college.

Our eldest student, now a parent. Her daughter Gowri is in Class ten and lives at Vanavil children's Home

Mari

When the tsunami struck, I was in a dire situation - no food, no water, and no place to call home. Unfortunately, we never received any relief assistance because everyone, including government officials, overlooked our lack of certificates. It was only when Revathi arrived that we finally had access to food three times a day.

I was just 18 years old at the time. I remember when Revathi Akka rented a house to educate our children. I decided to join in, and she constantly encouraged me to refrain from picking rags for a living. We shared many moments watching films together, and she even took me to the Thanjavur temple in a van, which was my first

experience traveling in one.

I got married at a young age, and all my children have received their education at Vanavil. Everything I had ever wished for has come true. My daughter Gowri now travels to different cities, and the transformation from that small house to this impressive school is remarkable. One thing that remains constant is the absence of discrimination at Vanavil, whether it's among staff, coordinators, or wardens - we are all treated with dignity. When people ask me what education can achieve, I simply show them Vanavil as the answer.



Vanitha

One of earliest students and now a parent. Three of her children Anu, Seetha & Vishnu attend Vanavil School

I first met Revathi Akka during the tsunami, a catastrophic event that left us with nothing. I was just 12 years old then, and I vividly remember receiving books and pens, as well as the house she rented for our school. I entered into an early marriage, and my sisters also had the privilege of receiving an education at Vanavil. Meena, one of my sisters, is now a reporter, and my own children are currently studying at Vanavil as well.

have gained our own identities and achieved financial independence. It's difficult to imagine what the past 18 years would have been like without Vanavil. My sisters have become role models for many, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps, and I am confident that my children will do the same.

Watching both my children and Vanavil grow and make history every day fills me with immense pride and gratitude.

Having obtained our certificates, we

One of the teachers in the initial years, lives in Thanjavur

Chitra

I completed my 12th grade and became a teacher at Vanavil, serving there from 2004 to 2009. During those days, it was a significant challenge just to get these children to attend school regularly. Teacher retention was low, and it wasn't an easy task.

Now, when I see how these children have grown and achieved such remarkable success, I feel an immense sense of pride, as if they

were my own children. It gives me goosebumps to witness their journey and witness them entering college.

Back then, the school building was still under construction, and I had no idea about the incredible power that this school would hold. I couldn't have imagined that it would unlock the potential and dreams of so many children.

Abhishek

Our Founding member, Working in Siemens from then till now, Father of Layah, lives in Bangalore.

Some kilometres from Thirukadaiyur, there was a small hamlet (a Cheri) in Kumarakudi, tucked away. The tsunami had wiped out the livelihoods of all land labourers, and there was no relief package or work there. So, we were working to bring attention to this hamlet and doing whatever we could to rebuild it. In this course and in association with several relief

networks, I met Niruj and Revathi. In my recollection, it was two to three months away from starting school. We used to meet the children at the bus stand, on the street at Velankanni Beach, or at the temporary shelters.

The first time I met the kids, Revathi, Niruj, and I went to the temporary shelter at four in the evening. It was an



Abhishek

open field outside the town with many tents. Kids saw us; someone shouted 'dooyi dooyi akka da' and all of them ran towards us from all directions, shouting on top of their voices. I was wondering what to do next! They just jumped right at us, on us, and climbed on my back. Held Revathi and us by hand, she pulled us into the ground where they were put up. In the next ten minutes of cacophony, they showed their new dance moves, stunts, and new war wounds - who caused them and how they punched them in return—and talked about who ran away with whom, what's for dinner (they used to have just one meal a day at four-thirty in the evening), where they went for business (to beg), and what's happening tomorrow, the new movie, who was ill, who went to the government hospital, and who was beaten up by whom? In less than ten minutes, tales were narrated and enacted in the cutest and most realistic ways possible. And, in those ten minutes, without my own knowledge, I had decided to stay, to leave my job, and to come back and work there. However, I had my bus back to Bangalore that very night. I boarded the bus, and as the bus left Nagapattinam, I couldn't bear the thought of leaving. I got down on the outskirts of Nagapattinam and walked back to the hotel where we were staying. I called up work the next day, went to the office a few days later, had many angsty calls with Revathi, and finally took off from work. To this day, I feel that unconscious decisions are the only ones that I have made freely. I was there for a good part of that year.

First days of the school:

I wasn't there. Revathi back then and

now has been the rallying point for organizing what was termed the "Rag Tag Army" of children to the public school, and close to forty children were not admitted to the school. There was no choice but to start a bridge school. Back in June of 2005, the projected yearly budget was roughly 4.2 lakhs, with another 2.5 lakhs or so of one-time costs. We were paupers! We had no building, no money; the tsunami sympathy was over. On top of that, nobody would give us a house to rent to run a school for these kids. With sixty thousand loans, we started thinking, Let's survive one year at least. Thirteenth Maraimalai Nagar, with a public ground in front and a thatch roof on the school we started. The uniform was set, and the school name was decided. Our first monthly report pretty much goes like this...

"We have survived, and our kids are not on the street". We have 55 children, three groupings, and 85 percent attendance. They come in the morning and leave in the evening with bicycles. We have four bicycles; in the first three days, all the wheels, not just the tires, of all the bicycles had to be repaired. One fracture, two cases of stitches, four to the hospital—and we lost two teachers and recruited one more. One teacher joined us in the morning and left in the evening and never came back, kids really pulled a number on her."

After the first few months, we had to change many buildings; the thatch wasn't permitted, we rented another place nearer, we moved out, and we built a playpen. I still remember its dimensions of 14 by 19 feet. That summer, an ice-cream cart called

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Lallan used to come every day, and we couldn't afford to buy it daily. Our kids are street smart, invincible, and can navigate anything, so the school girls negotiated a price with him, made the younger children a priority, and told him to come only twice a week. Lallan became quite close to us, and on the day he had to return to Rajasthan, he brought a full cart of ice cream and sweets, which we emptied for 40 rupees.

There are countless anecdotes, but the next one baffles me even now. On the very first day of school, with crispy, neat new uniforms, the kids start coming an hour earlier than expected. Muthu, probably six or seven years old, dressed neatly in the new uniform with well combed hair, stood in front of the gate with a big brick in his hand and an arsenal of some more rocks, threatening to hit anyone who entered the school.

Some of the older girls, Laxmi and Satya caught him and straightened him up. Till today, I don't know why he did that; in the coming weeks, he was one of the studious ones, and of course he remained menacing.

Just after that, a fight broke out over a bicycle. School bags and books were used for attack and defense, and some kids were already rolling in the playground. By the time we lined them up for prayer, it already looked like the day was over; shirts were out, footwear was gone, and a cloud of dust was all around. Somehow, we managed, started our prayer, and it got quiet suddenly. I don't understand a word of our school prayer, but that day's first prayer at that altar, humming along with the kids, has been the only sacred prayer that stayed; it made me feel complete and void.



A group of approximately 15 children and two adults are posing for a photo in front of a wall covered with their colorful drawings. The children are dressed in casual clothing, and the drawings feature various bright colors and simple patterns.

As the sun on the more heavily shaded side of the Journal in school, she notices a light break out between the pages. "It's not a stain," she explains. "It's a tear." It makes them apologize to each other. It's a typical day in the life of A. Kappalbert, a 13-year-old girl from the town of Varnali, Children's Home, who does the role of a caretaker of children.

"This home has taught me important lessons in life, like how to be a mother, which is why I want to become a psychologist and treat people in my village and other villages from the

2001 mission to help with their work."

"While waiting at the bus stop, I saw a small girl carrying a malnourished infant in her arms and holding the baby tightly to the breast while she slept. This incident broke me. I decided to stay back and help the community," says Bredollet.

"I observed that the boom boom mustache and narcissus communities here will send a

LEARNING TOGETHER: Visalal has helped produce more than 100 first-generation college graduates

The school includes facilities to conduct summer camps and courses such as a library service, theatre training, music, sports, social, art and craft sessions, full folk art training in periwé and alikúnán. "We have young students from all over India volunteering here," says the director, Mrs. S. Sathya. Dr. Sathya is a sociologist who works with Yashini.

Yashini was established in 1995 by a group of associates from the Government Medical College, Madurai. The school does not receive education fees. This is how it all began," says Sathya.

Recruits and her team of 10 staff members have been educating the first generation gamblers. M. Lalitha, in 2008, Yashini has helped more than 1,000 children from the two communities, providing them with 100 to 120 hours of training. Yashini has received financial support for 380 students, and helped to procure more than 100 first generation children to attend the school. Yashini is a place of hope for the children of gamblers.

[illegible]

Dr. Vamsuri Thirumala on Sunday organized a special empowerment programme on the occasion of the 100th birth anniversary of the late Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The programme was held at the Government Medical College, Tiruchy on Sunday.

The program was inaugurated by the Managing Director, JGG, Social Work Department, of Bharathidasan University, Tiruchy.

Prof. Premo Revathi, founder of Vamsuri Trust, said, "Many children in our country are facing hardships in pursuing higher education, which plays a crucial role in their lives. We are proud to have organized this special programme to support them."

Dr. Vamsuri Thirumala, a prominent leader of the Vamsuri Trust, said, "I am pursuing a private college programme at a tertiary college in Tiruchy. The program is very helpful and it helps me choose my path in life. More than 60 students are participating in this program."



The programme had special lecture delivered by Dr. Nampalirawm, MSc, Social Work Department of Dharmapala University, Jamsil

Vanavil School, run by a not-for-profit trust and India Foundation for the Arts, organised 'The Nomad,' a collaborative art show of eminent artists and children of nomadic communities at Sikkal in Nagapattinam district on Friday.

Additional Collector (Development) and Project Director of District Rural Development Agency Ranjeet Singh inaugurated the art show at the school premises in Keerzhakarayruppu village near Sikkal. The school has been functioning for over 18 years for marginalised nomadic communities such as the Adiyans, who were traditionally the Boom Boom Nattukarans, and the Nattukavans.

Additional Collector Ranjeet Singh at the art show held at SAAST in Nagapattinam district on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The three-day show will bring together artists and students to discuss and work and paintings during the show and performed Paris.

Organising such an event is a part of performance-based pedagogy in the school that would help the students to learn quickly, he added.

REPRODUCING a plant

children of nomadic tribal communities to display their creativity. Vaseel Trust in col-

The exhibition showcasing a collection of around 35 artworks by both professional artists as well as tribal children

tioned by the alternative residential school to open for public viewing between 10 am and 5 pm for a total of three days.

"Vasuvail trust has been working with children from coastal communities, including Boon Boon Matruhara and Narikunavai, for the past 15 years through an arts and pe-

performance-based pedagogy," said Natarajan Gangaiahari, art teacher at Vinayal school.

Seven such students of the school have contributed artworks, which include paintings and photographs. Additional Collector Ranjeet Singh was the chief guest.

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Vanavil Trust,

🏠 No.264, Public Office Road,
Velipalayam, Nagapattinam 611001

✉ team@vanavil.org

☎ 8072691159

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