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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

- Children educated in our school: 495
- Children provided care & protection in our home: 541
- First-generation college graduates: 104

- Families provided with relief materials: 15000
- Children provided educational & nutritional support: 1000+
- Women provided livelihood support: 466
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
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 absenteeees 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
Mr Johny Tom Varghese l. 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 tribes 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.

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**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.
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.
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.
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
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.
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.
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 ‘Boon 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...
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, “Anjamnal 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.
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.

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.

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.

Number of Beneficiaires: 86
Community-Based Child Protection

Overview:

Through our Community-Based Child Protection program, we offer care and protection for nomadic tribal boys and girls. We place the nomadic boys without stable families or shelter in government SC, ST hostels. Simultaneously, we extend Family-Based Child Protection, providing school education, attendance tracking, healthcare monitoring, and academic progress tracking. We conduct periodic medical camps, offer extracurricular activities, life skills training, and provide monthly nutrition support to needy students.

No of Children provided care and protection in 2023: 60
Kathiresan, who is 11 years old, lives in Thiruvanjiyam village, Thiruvarur 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.
Financials

Donations

- HNI: 46%
- Foundation: 14%
- Crowdfunding: 16%
- Individual: 7%
- CSR: 17%

Project Expenses

- Primary School: 31%
- Higher Education: 20%
- Children's Home: 15%
- After Schools: 15%
- CBCP: 6%
- Livingston: 12%
- Admin: 13%
- Awareness & Advocacy: 1%

2022-2023 Annual Report
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.

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

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.
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

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.
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.

Having obtained our certificates, we 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.

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

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.

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
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
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.
Media & Awards

Best NGO working for Upliftment of Women in Tamilnadu - 2022 Independence Day CM’s Award by the Tamil Nadu Government

Amazing Indians 2022, Revathi Radhakrishnan, Director and Managing Trustee of Vanavil Trust was honored with the Amazing Indians award by Times Now.

Giving a community a school to call home

SPL empowerment event draws 60 tribal students

Young nomads’ artistic flair on display in Nagai

Vanavil trust organizes art show in Nagapattinam

The Hindu Rayalu
NAGAPATTINAM

Vanavil School, run by a social project of the Hindu Foundation and India Foundation for the Blind, organized ‘The Nore’ a collaborative art show of remixed art and children of nomadic communities at Lakshmi Park on Friday. Additional Collector (Development and Project Director of District Rural Development Agency) Harish organis the art show at the school premises in Kothandampathy village near Shivalik. The school has been working for over 18 years for marginalized nomadic communities such as the Sayais, who were traditionally the Loame Borno adivanarad, and the Kondhavas.

The three-day show will bring together artists and students to discuss and share various performing arts, paintings, photography, and documentary filmmaking, said S. Varsha, the art teacher. Fifty students showcased the art works and paintings during the show and performed dramas. Organizing such shows is a part of a project being funded by the school, which helps develop children and positive work ethics, he added.

The students showcased their art works in a creative manner and received praise from the visitors.

The school was established in 1993 by the Vanavil Trust with a mission to provide education and vocational training to nomadic children. The school currently has an enrollment of 60 students from various tribes such as the Loame Borno, Adivanarad, and Kondhavas. The students are taught skills such as carpentry, masonry, and tailoring, and are also encouraged to pursue higher education. The school also offers scholarships to meritorious students who want to pursue higher studies.

The school has received recognition and awards for its contributions to the community. In 2022, it was honored with the Amazing Indians award by Times Now for its work in empowering nomadic children.

The school is currently in need of funds to continue its operations and provide better facilities to its students. Donations are welcomed to support the school in its mission to provide an education and a better future to nomadic children.

For more information, visit the school’s official website or contact the school’s Principal. Additionally, the school is also looking for volunteers who can help with the daily operations and teaching of the students.

The school is committed to creating a better future for nomadic children by providing them with education and vocational skills. Your support is crucial in achieving this goal.
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