

# FRIENDS OF METTUPALAYAM TRUST

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## Change

In our last newsletter we focused on health and wellness and how much has changed for the better, as a result of your enduring support. In this newsletter, we report on some more challenging changes at the project.

### **Dr Paramasivum**



It was with sadness that we learned of the sudden death of Dr Paramasivum, our retained GP who has provided such dedicated and invaluable service to the villagers around Mettupalayam over many years. All those who have had the privilege to visit the project know what an inspirational man he was, highly qualified and respected, completely dedicated to his local community and always arriving for our clinics on his trusty Honda Hero motorcycle. I particularly remember a clinic he held in a local village, where he was delighted to welcome my wife Jean (a nurse) to help. The queue got longer and longer, 180 local villagers, seen over 3 hours, but his patience was endless, always making each patient feel valued and cared for. At 70 years old, he had no intention of ever retiring. It was his life's work. We are hugely thankful to him and send our condolences and thanks to his wife and family.

But, with a change, so they say, comes an opportunity and Venkat has found a replacement local GP, Dr Sangeetha Priya, who also wants to give back to her community. It will take time for her to build the doctor / patient relationships, but early indications are positive and Venkat reports an increase in women attending the clinics.

### **Ramya**



It was with pleasure that we learned that Venkat's daughter, Ramya, is to be married. The marriage will take place on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Her husband, **check name?**, comes from Venkat and Ramya's hometown in western Tamil Nadu. He works in IT and will be stationed in Singapore for the next two years and Ramya will join him there after their marriage. We are delighted for them. This will be a big change, not just for Ramya, but for Venkat and the project. As you will know, Ramya has been a huge part of the project at Mettupalayam. Amongst other things, she has been, acting as a lead coordinator for the teachers, directing the craft-based school work, providing special needs support for Boubadi, doing the project accounts, not to mention running the family home – in fact Venkat has described her as his deputy Director.

Venkat is delighted that he has arranged a suitable marriage for his daughter and he hopes her departure will provide opportunities for teachers and others to take on new responsibilities. We feel sure that Ramya will provide advice and support from her new home and we look forward to sharing news and photos of the marriage and the new project arrangements in our next newsletter.

### **Boubadi**



Boubadi was born with cerebral palsy and had great difficulty with actions requiring coordination, such as walking, talking and concentrating. Our teachers and pupils have provided amazing support throughout his years at our primary school. Here you see Ramya providing individual help with writing skills, using special equipment provided by friends in the UK. Boubadi will finish primary school in May next year and it is clear to Venkat and the teaching staff that he will not cope with a move to a normal local high school, where class sizes are large and

there would not be individual targeted support.

We have a history of providing long-term help for local children in need, like Boubadi. Children like Rajeshwari, who was born deaf and dumb, who we provide financial support to so that she may attend a school for children with hearing difficulties. Venkat is now researching options and the likely costs for supporting Boubadi and is hopeful that there may be a suitable school in nearby Chengalpattu. We will keep you informed of developments.

### **School News**

There is change too with our Crakehall teaching staff, as one leaves to be married and another to have her first child. However, we are delighted to welcome back Siva, who has returned to work with us. He



is a delightful young man who really engages with the pupils and has a practical side too, which you can see here with these fantastic models and their proud makers.

Another new employee is Sundari, whose two children, Gopika and Santhosh, both attend our school and are pictured together here. Sundari's husband, a former pupil of ours, works away in Chennai all week, returning only at weekends. Previously, Sundari worked locally, packing snack foods, but was very poorly paid. As our school cleaner, she will receive a proper wage, decent working conditions. Crucially, she will also be close to her children and working family-



friendly working hours.

### **UK News**

Thanks to all who have been involved in fundraising recently. The ceilidh at Crakehall, here in N Yorkshire raised nearly £500. And a similar amount was raised by Adele, who along with David's sister walked the final 100 miles of the Santiago de Compostela to raise money for the project her husband started all those years ago. Other friends are now in the process of manning Xmas fairs, selling goods and raising awareness.

Your goodwill and support help us deal with all the change and challenge that India always brings! Thank you all and we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy and fulfilling 2019.