

FRIENDS OF METTUPALAYAM TRUST

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 1054673

www.irdt.co.uk Facebook- Friends of Mettupalayam Community

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A celebration!



Last month we had the pleasure of a visit from our Project Director, Venkat and his daughter Ramya. During their visit, we had a ceilidh, which was billed as a celebration of the project, but gave Venkat and everyone present the chance to say a special thank you to our long-standing Trustees Francis and Rosie. They are pictured here with Ramya and their granddaughters and wearing the special garlands Venkat brought with him. Rosie and Francis have devoted much of their lives to the charity over the last 20 + years and are now planning to take a small step back. It was a wonderful night.

Venkat and Ramya's visit (paid for in full by Rosie and Francis) involved a packed programme of events, meeting friends, visiting schools and promoting the project. A particular highlight was an activity day at Crakehall Primary School, N.Yorks. The staff and children enthusiastically joined in with a variety of workshops run by Venkat, Ramya, trustees and friends who had all visited the project over the years. The day had a tremendous and genuine sharing vibe to it and all involved gained an insight into the lives of others both in Crakehall, N. Yorks and Crakehall, Mettupalayam. Subsequently and very generously, the school donated all the proceeds of a recent Fun Run to FOM- c£700. A big thank you goes to everyone involved.

The photo here is of another school visit, to Aiskew and Leeming Bar Primary school – Rosie is in full flow, watched on by the pupils and their Indian visitors. One reception year pupil was so taken with the photos and information about the village and school in Mettupalayam that later, he and a friend made a lovely model and proudly showed it to their teacher!



Thinking to the Future

During their visit, the Trustees held a meeting with Venkat and Ramya to talk about their thoughts for the future development of the project. This was a very positive meeting where Venkat focused on five priority areas – Education, Economic Development, Farming, The Gypsy Community and Health. There is much to discuss and new initiatives to consider, but the Trustees were delighted with the direction and amazing energy given by both Venkat and Ramya and gave them our strong support for the future.

School News



We keep a close contact with our Mettupalayam Crakehall students after they move on to Secondary school and Venkat is rightly proud of their achievements. We currently have the first-ranked students in year groups six to nine at the local girls secondary school where there are over 1000 pupils! Pictured here are three of them, Jayalakshmi, Devika and Mohanna Sundari. The broad-based education you support is giving children from very poor backgrounds the opportunity to excel.

We were delighted to hear that our former head teacher, Sathish and our current head teacher, Mohanna have announced their engagement and plan to marry soon. Here they are at a function to celebrate. In the back row, you will also see Jenny Pye, a student from the UK, who was visiting the project in June. She is the third of her sisters to visit – we really appreciate the support and friendship visitors to the project bring.



With the new school year now recommenced, at Nambikki we have approximately 75 pupils and have retained the same four teachers. In Mettupalayam, there are 85 pupils, with six teachers and Venkat has engaged two assistants. Both are previous students, including one local gypsy girl who has recently finished her higher secondary education.

Health Support



Our invaluable weekly health clinic run by our retained local GP, Dr Paramasivam, continues to provide the medical and health educational support which has helped to greatly improve the lives of local people. We also recently hosted and facilitated a dental camp, run by a local dental college, which was free for all to attend – we understand there were 52 extractions! 55 others needed to go to the college for further treatment and many had general hygienist work provided. It doesn't look like your average trip to the dentist, does it?!

Tree Planting

Venkat and his team have recently bought 1500 (yes 1500) tree saplings at a total cost of just over £100. Of these, 500 teak tree saplings were provided free by the Tamil Nadu Government. This purchase looks like a shrewd investment as the trees include Almonds, Lemons, Pomegranates, and Tamarinds -all should provide ecological, nutritional and financial returns. Planting has started with Teak trees on either side of the road between the project, school and the farm area. The picture shows Venkat at the nursery buying the saplings with the support of the local Lions Club President.



Irregular monsoon rainfall and drought conditions have been an increasing feature over the last 5 to 10 years. We recently had the loan of a JCB to dig drainage and water channels around our farm area to better capture, retain and utilise that most precious element. Venkat wants to increase the level of nutritious food production, to sell and to use within the project, whilst also providing some greater employment opportunities for local people on the farm. Just in the last few days, there has been an unseasonably late summer monsoon and there should be enough water to plant around 10 acres of rice paddy. In previous years, we have kept most of the rice from our farm and used it for the school and old people meals programs.

UK News



Apart from the flurry of activities surrounding our visitors in July, friends continue to promote the charity and raise funds. There have been garden parties, coffee mornings, talks and fairs and we continue to be humbled by individual contributions. A huge thank you to everyone involved. It is always good to be able to say that all UK costs are covered by friends and trustees, so that every penny raised goes where it is needed in Tamil Nadu. We are also pleased to be able to provide a new and simple online link for donations and fundraising through BTmydonate, which has no commission, set-up fee or monthly charges. The website link is added here (and also allows for regular monthly donations).

<https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/fom>

If you have any questions, comments or ideas please do feel free to call or drop one of us a line. We very much welcome your input and of course your continued support for the amazing work carried out at the project. Also, if you have received a paper copy of this newsletter and have an email address, it would help us to reduce costs in future if you are happy to provide it to us.

Thank you.