

# FRIENDS OF METTUPALAYAM TRUST

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 1054673

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***“The relief of poverty and sickness, the advancement of education and the preservation of good health, both physical and mental, primarily in and around the village of Mettupalayam and the district of Chengalpattu, South India.”***

Dear Friends,

In our February newsletter we referred to our Charity’s Objects, shown above and we focussed on education. In this newsletter we thought we would put the focus on what your support does, and plans to do, in relieving poverty and sickness and encouraging health and wellness in the project area.

Our first set of photos take us back in time. The basic dwelling you see was at our quarry settlement. Although perhaps quaint to look at, these and many similar houses in Mettupalayam were open to insects, snakes and the elements. The photo gives us an idea of the level of poverty Venkat and David encountered some 33 (yes 33) years ago. Through your support over the years most villagers are now in relatively sturdy concrete houses like the one in the centre of our photo set. Our final photo shows the first village water pump, built in the early 1990’s and still in use - since supplemented by wells and a 10,000 litre water tank with filter supplying the school. A secure roof over people’s heads, clean water to drink – these were the initial building blocks of a rural development plan.



The poverty visible through such rudimentary housing was accompanied by poor health, malnutrition and low employment. There was an extreme lack of education with 90% of the population under 25 being illiterate – there is now full literacy and our primary school provision launches many from the village and the local tribal community into secondary and tertiary education, with the resultant improvement in employment opportunities. As you know, our more recent focus has been the tribal children who are sometimes discriminated against locally and whose parents have not in the past valued formal education. Over half of primary age tribal children now attend our school. Venkat’s ambition is 100% attendance.



Health and wellbeing is a now key element of our regular school curriculum. School meals include nutritious vegetables, eggs and mid-morning snacks. Carrots, not commonly grown locally are a treat and you can see how much the children enjoy them.

A more recent addition to the curriculum is the weekly yoga class. Venkat and Ramya say that

not only do the children enjoy this, but it significantly improves their mental wellbeing and concentration. And we continue to supply nutritious meals to needy old people, who may be the last to be fed in a large family.

Your support has enabled a wide supply of much needed healthcare to the village and surrounding area. Venkat fosters great relationships with local organisations such as the Lions club who provide regular eye and dental camps.



These provide treatment where necessary, but also encourage good practice such as regular teeth cleaning. The weekly surgeries led by our local GP and his nurse provide excellent local treatment and diagnosis of illness. Unfortunately, following a trend we are all too familiar with, we see the rise of diabetes and related conditions as a major challenge. Our particular focus now must be about health education – helping people to help themselves through good hygiene, diet and exercise.



Our final picture is of Manivan and his family. Manivan is from the local tribal community and was badly affected by polio as a child. He is one of many local people with disabilities who we have supported with practical and personal help. In 2007 we arranged and paid for him to travel to Bangalore to have a free operation, organised by APD, a large disability charity with whom we have worked over the years. This much improved his mobility which enabled him to find work and subsequently marry. Here he is with his wife and their 6-year old son, Ganesh, who is starting school with us in first standard (I am fairly sure he is smiling, not crying!).

The photos in this newsletter try to tell the story of how much your support continues to make a positive difference to so many people, lifting them from poverty, improving their health and wellbeing and advancing education in a positive and proactive environment.

Finally, a huge thanks to all those friends who organise and partake in fundraising which is such a significant help in funding our work in India. We now have a fundraising sub-group which is planning a series of events through autumn and towards Christmas. These include projects at schools, craft fairs and a *ceilidh* at *Crakehall village hall* on xx September. If you want more information on these events, or have any ideas of your own, please contact Adele, whose details you will find at the top of this newsletter.

Thank you from your Trustees and more especially from Venkat, Ramya and their team in India.