

FRIENDS OF METTUPALAYAM TRUST

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 1054673

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Facebook- Friends of Mettupalayam Community

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A cushion? Some water? A toothbrush? Sun-cream?...

...These were just a few of the suggestions from Key Stage 1 primary pupils at Bedale Primary school, when asked what visitors might take with them when travelling to the project. And what good ideas they were! Our visit to the school assembly was the renewal of a long-standing connection with the school which has resulted in fundraising support for the charity over many years. Our invitation was part of a programme of cultural learning and awareness being led by one of the teachers who wants to grow more regular contact and support for FOM. It will, we are sure, be of benefit to those we support in and around Mettupalayam, but importantly also to the children at Bedale. As our co-founder Adele reminded us at the assembly "you can't give without receiving". Past pupils have been among those who have visited and volunteered at the project and who remain friends. We feel very lucky to have our ongoing connections and the support of schools in North Yorkshire and beyond and will strive to nurture them.

News from the project

Before ...



New starters at our primary school at Mettupalayam, these four young ones are from the local tribal village where Venkat does so much to encourage and facilitate education and good health. I am sure you agree they look very smart in their new uniforms, all part of the provision your support enables. Recently Venkat has been taking an even more proactive approach with the village, personally taking a nutritious breakfast each school morning

to 15 children in that community who need it most. He eats a breakfast of Idli with them and then ensures they come to school! He is a creative and persuasive man. The targeted nutritional support continues during school hours, where in addition to school lunch and snacks, those particularly undernourished children now also receive regular milk.

This approach is a recognition of the differing levels of wealth and poverty within the school catchment, as those more able and well-educated parents gain better employment and income, which is reflected in the support their children receive, whether that be in clothing or diet. Speaking to Venkat recently, he said that he

...and after!





was beginning to see the dream he had 30 years ago now beginning to become reality for some. This of course is a direct result of the project's work and your support over the years. It is making a difference, every day. So, as some families improve their standard of living, Venkat is continually re-focusing his attention on those who need it – like those children at the tribal village community, but also the local older-age folk, who tend to be at the end of the queue in Indian culture. This issue is exacerbated by many of the younger adults now working away from the village. For those in need, we now provide some meals, access to our free weekly health clinic, new clothing once per year, and annual health camps for issues such as cataract operations. In addition, there is advice on accessing government pensions and support for funeral expenses. In the last newsletter we mentioned that a peanut oil cooperative had been set up and we are pleased to say that our first harvest has provided 1500kg of nuts, with 300kg going straight to the villagers who picked the crop. The photo here shows Rajeshwari's grandmother and aunt sorting the groundnuts. The remainder of the crop will be used for nutritious meals and some sold to the oil cooperative.



Numbers at our two schools are lower this year, with 65 currently enrolled at Mettupalayam and 32 at Nambikki. Family planning incentives have apparently encouraged many families to stop at 2 children. At Nambikki, situated on the Bay of Bengal coast, there is some migration of families away from traditional fishing towards economic opportunities closer to the large cities such as Chennai. Our two photos here see the minus class at Mettupalayam (supported by our great friend Gomathy, occasionally back with us now that



her two children are at school) and a “pooja” religious ceremony event at Nambikki school.

Three of your trustees will be visiting the project during November and December. This will provide us the first-hand opportunity to see the benefits your project gives and to show our appreciation to all those involved in making things happen in Mettupalayam and at Nambikki. We look forward to sharing stories from these visits. All travel costs are of course taken by each individual, as all funds raised go directly to India, where they are needed.

Finally, a number of friends are planning to hold coffee mornings in the run up to Christmas to celebrate FOM and raise funds – please feel free to join in!

Until then, Venkat and his team pass on their heartfelt thanks and we wish you all a very merry festive season.