2008-09 has been an year of consolidation and prioritization of our ideas and activities. This year we hopped from 75 children to 140 in the school and from 35 to 65 in the hostel. The big increase in numbers shook us for a while and we were working overtime to obtain the means to keep things going but we have been very fortunate to have solid local support. Many people from Dharmapuri and Salem visit our school and donate cash or food items or provide a special meal for the children. The children have had the blessings and the good will of all the visitors.

On the administrative front we found some relief when both the 80G renewal and the government approval of the Nursery & Primary school went through. We now have 39 children under the National Child Labour Prevention Program (NCLP). Most of these children have been unable to cope with the formal schooling and dropped out. Through this program we would help them to join the regular schools in three years. The NCLP director of Dharmapuri district, Mr. Saravanan, has expressed his appreciation by felicitating Madhavraj for his efforts as their teacher. There was also a fair organized by the NCLP to demonstrate the different learning and teaching methods used in the schools and a few children from our school went to the fair with some fun games. 7 boys will pass the 8th grade and go on to the join the government schools in the area with 4 of them opting for English medium instruction.

After a brief period of shock due to the increase in the number of children we had inadvertently managed to admit into our school, we took stock of the situation and got to work making sure that all our systems of maintenance and study worked in spite of the vast increase. With Kuppusamy, Ram, Sembagam and Madhavraj handling the NCLP group, Samanthi and Rajeshwari taking care of the pre-primary level and Rani, Rameshwari and Meenakshi managing the primary school we are happy to say that we are extremely satisfied and pleasantly surprised at our own achievements of this year and the complete cooperation of the children. Almost 25 children had come to our school without even a basic knowledge of alphabet or numbers up to 10. Most of them have been placed into classes of their age groups and after another year will be as good as the others.

The content and methodology has been retained in spite of the fact that we now have a 1:20 teacher children ratio as against our 1:12 last year. The children still enjoy having science, art, math and language all mixed up in one class. The classification class for the 1st grade for example is great fun because first each of them has to collect one leaf of each kind. Then they pool them together to see how many leaves of each kind the whole class has. Then they describe the leaves as bigger than, rougher than, smoother than, thinner than, rounder than, longer than, etc. Then they learn what the leaves do for the tree and for us and finally they use the leaves to create works of art.
The children were lucky and blessed with a trip for each level to different parts of Tamilnadu and even to Varanasi. The pre primary section does not do a trip outside but have a picnic within the campus. The first and second grade children went to a water park at Salem. The 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students went to yercaud. The 6th and 7th grade went to Tanjavore, Kallanai and Pondicherry, while the 8th grade visited Varanasi and Nilgiris. This year 15th aug was a great event especially so because of the increase in numbers there was real competition and every body enjoyed the competition. A local hardware shop keeper decide to give the children a Rajasthani feast for the occasion.

The timely advent of rains made it possible to start the farming activity on time. The 6th and 7th children prepared their plots and started their observation, drawing and measuring activities. We had a good crop of sunflowers and carrots, all organically grown. We also had some tomatoes, ladyfinger and cluster beans. During the divali vacation we did an intensive ten day training of our teachers to handle the increase in numbers though they had been doing fairly well already. This helped them in deciding how to go ahead after the basic language skills and math skills were acquired by the children.

In the end of November we had Piyush, who has an organization called SEEDS in Salem, come and talk to the children about his work. He is actively involved in fighting large companies who are polluting the water and air around Salem. He spoke about the social responsibility of individuals. He also requested the children to pay homage to all the victims of the Bhopal industrial tragedy and to cooperate with anyone who is fighting similar fights.

Priya and Krishnan came to help the Puvidham teachers prepare their own curriculum using local experiences and ideas. The teachers have started the work on the curriculum for the rural children of this region. The stories, poems and activities are compiled from various sources and a great many have been written by the teachers themselves. The whole process is very enlightening for the group and hidden treasures are being found in each and every one. Krishnan is an avid walker and he and some of the children decided to take a walk to Hogennakal which is about 30kms from our school. They all immensely enjoyed the walk and the children learned a lot about local flora and fauna.

Annie Owen and her niece came to visit Puvidham from London. They are both artists and we had an art day where every one participated in drawing and painting. They also spoke to the children about their experiences and shared with them their interest in painting. They taught the children finger painting and every one was thrilled with the results in colour and form.
Due to failure of rains we were not able to launch our bamboo nursery project as it was envisaged last year. But a small nursery has been created by the middle school students and we hope to be able to take it up to the full scale this year. We have added weaving in our list of school activities for the students. Two looms have been installed in the school and children have already learnt how to weave mats from waste cloth.

The school year ended with the annual science fair and an exhibition on “Food as Medicine” was prepared by the children. Even the food stall had items made out of high nutrition food sources like ragi and sprout accompanied with medicinal teas.

The increased scale of operations has put a severe strain on our finances. Our annual running expenses almost doubled. While Asha for Education London chapter has been supporting us the last several years, we managed to handle the finances this year due to the additional support provided by Asha for Education, Silicon Valley chapter. Going forward, with the school stabilizing at a student population of 150 we need to figure out ways to find finances in a sustained basis. We have now started to consciously build a corpus fund for this purpose. We would request you to help us build this fund.

The increase in the school strength also meant a corresponding increase in the number of hostel residents. We now have almost 70 children living in the hostel and we were forced to start constructing a new hostel block to accommodate them. So far we have managed with personal donations and assistance from our friends and families. We are thankful to Mr. M.V.Murugappan and The AMM Foundation, Chennai for funding a significant portion of the construction expenses. The ground floor (boys block) construction is complete but the first floor (girls block) is stalled due to paucity funds. We would greatly appreciate any contribution from the kind readers of this report towards the hostel building construction.

Kindly fill the donor form and mail it to us to our mailing address or e-mail us.

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**Donor Form**

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Puvidham Rural Development Trust has 80(G) approval from the Indian Income Tax department and donations to the trust are tax deductable.


Puvidham Rural Development Trust is authorized to receive foreign funds. Our FCRA number is 075870079.