It is time to update the Puvidham extended family about the happenings of the last 5 months. We have grown beyond our limits and have been preparing to extend our limits in keeping with our growth. There are **135 day scholars** as against the 72 last year and **70 in the hostel** as against the 38 of last year. We were caught totally unprepared for the increase in numbers but we were unable to refuse admission to children both in the school and in the hostel because the parents came with such confidence in the abilities of the school.

Earlier in the end of May we had a three day sharing with Siragu Montessori School in Chennai. 25 Children and 5 Teachers from the school came to Puvidham. There was cross learning between the children and they jointly performed a skit on depletion of environment resources and played 20 questions and dumb charades. It was a great experience for the children and for the teachers.

With the sudden increase in the numbers we were very worried if our methodology will sustain. But in spite of the numbers we are still able to provide individual attention and care to each child. After the initial settling in time for the new hostel children and some breaches in the regular peace we are back to our normal pace and activity. The 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> class children were hosted by the Tarunam group at Salem and had a day long fun time at the Water park. The children will remember the experience for a life time. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> along with some drop out children who have joined in the informal school went to Yercaud for a hike. The climb on the hill and the bath in the cold water of the waterfalls in the middle of a dense forest makes for a very rich learning environment.

The 8<sup>th</sup> level children went to Varanasi for a tour with their teacher Ram. It was a unique experience for the children to go to the northern part of India and see the different terrain and culture.

We are indeed blessed with such good friends who come forward to share our work with such gladness. One friend from Chennai who has a farm has been donating rice for the hostel. One Friend from Dharmapuri makes sure that we are never short of Wheat flour. And another group called the Rajasthan Glass house came to the hostel on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August and provided a typical Rajasthani feast for all the school children after the sports events on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

We are also extremely grateful to Mr. Manikkam from Dharmapuri who is forever thinking of us and putting us in contact with local people who come to spend time with the children.

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 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.
We have been working with our older children and preparing them for street theatre. They did their first performance in a village called Nekkundi around 10Kms from Puvidham. They were very much appreciated and it has done wonders for their confidence. They will now perform once a month in one village or the other. The theme of the drama was to bring back recognition to our traditional local medicine for small ailments.

This year due to timely rains we have been able to start our farming project early. The children have planted cluster beans, lady finger, tomatoes and onions. They regularly water, measure, draw and spray their plants with organic sprays. They are waiting for the harvest to be able to weigh their produce and calculate their profit or loss in the farming plot. We then help them to extrapolate the figure to larger plots. We are putting together a team of young experts who will then take their knowledge to the local farmers and help them to convert to organic farming. The 5th and 6th children conducted a survey in one village nearby and found to their surprise that though a lot of people make light of the whole concept of depletion of soil and scoff at organic farming, there are also an equally large number who see the disadvantages of the conventional chemical farming and want to change over if possible. With this team of students we plan to go to the farmers next year.

Among all this work one major job that was needed to be done and is still not finished is the construction of a new hostel block to accommodate the 70 odd children who live at Surabhi, our hostel block. We have completed the roof concrete for one floor with our own funds and with the help of labour inputs by the parents of the children who live in the hostel. The second floor that is planned to house the girls is still not done due to lack of funds.

The lions club of Hosur Sipcot honoured 11 teachers of the region and Meenakshi was also given the best teacher award. They also made a donation to the trust and made a subsequent visit to the school. The children organized a science exhibition and a cultural programme in their honour.

The three day trip to Kallanai, where the oldest dam and irrigation system are still functional, Tanjavore, Puducheri and Fort Gingee was the perfect outing for the 5th, 6th and 7th level children.

Dr. Kiran from Puducheri had made arrangements for the children to stay in the Ashram guest house, while old friends from Quilapalayam village in Auroville organized the beach bath and breakfast and dinner. In Tanjavore Ms Revathi hosted the children in the school run by her the Vanavil school and we had sharing time with the children who are studying in Vanavil school.

Do look us up at www.puvidham.net or come to puvidham in person any time.

If you would like to foster one or more children or contribute to any of the activities, do contact us at puvidham@gail.com