

NEWS FROM VIDİYAL

A lot has been happening, as always, at Vidiyal since our last newsletter. The biggest change is that Sharmila (Jim's wife) has been working as a Doctor of Indian medicine at a hospital some distance away from Madurai. This has meant that she has had to relinquish some of her roles at Vidiyal and Jim is taking on and training new staff. The changes have meant a lot of adjustment for all concerned. We have just received the good news that Sharmila's request for a change of posting has been granted and she will now be working only 12 miles from Madurai. This will enable her to spend much more time with her own family and the children from the Shelter Home.

CHILD REPRESENTATIVES

The children continue to be real ambassadors for Children's Rights, speaking on behalf of the slum children. Nandhini, Palaneeswari and Abdul Rahman were featured in the local newspaper during a rally in Madurai, which culminated in a valedictory attended by 750 people.

Having been involved in the preparation of the Children's Alternate Report, Bharath was chosen as one of 6 state representatives to go to Chennai for the release of the report. He also was featured in the news, in print and in the electronic media.

UNICEF requested a representative to go to Delhi and Arunraj attended the children's conference there. This was yet another recognition of the work of Vidiyal. Arunraj, Nandhini and Palaneeswari went to Coutralam as zonal members of the FCMRP and Jeyakumar and Palaneeswari travelled to Bangalore for a programme on Children in Governance.

It is amazing to think that these children from the slums of Madurai have matured and developed with the confidence and clarity to make speeches and join in discussions, even with members of the government. Vidiyal has a lot of which to be proud!



NEW YEAR

Over New Year Vidiyal held five different workshops for different age groups of children. All were very much enjoyed and the children learnt a get deal. Jim worked with one group of children on gender equality and says how good it was to see the children growing in clarity and sensitivity.

The New Year's Day celebration was designed and organised by the volunteers—young men and women who have grown up through Vidiyal and are now continuing with higher studies but help out in their spare time. It was a huge success and several "old boys and girls" from Vidiyal returned for the occasion.



EASTER

Easter was a time of great celebration at Vidiyal as Jim reports:

"Today we had a get together in the shelter home in brought tears in my eyes. Sharmila also joined me and we played the role of guardian/parents to those who do not have anybody. The parents/guardians enjoyed the day and told us that it was an unforgettable day in their lives. We could feel God's hand in it and felt so happy that Vidiyal is such a safe nest for many children coming from difficult circumstances. We had competitions for pairs in child – guardian which every one enjoyed. Children also exhibited their talents and shared happy moments.

I and Sharmila personally sat with every child with their respective guardian and explained the dream that we build for each child. In our journey for the past 13 years we had several programmes in Vidiyal, but this was the first of its kind and every one was moved with the personal touch of Vidiyal. We also remembered you and every one who supports NewDawn India and thanked God for your kind support. A special prayer was offered.

At the end of the programme each child got an Easter Egg which was a surprise to them. (In India Easter eggs are not that popular)

We came back home with a heart filled with joy and satisfaction. Thank you very much for being such loving caring friends in our life. As I always say Vidiyal is a way of life which brings such an impact in the lives of hundreds of children and their families.”

RECEPTION HOMES

Vidiyal's Reception Home takes in boys that the police have found on the streets. By law they have to be kept locked in, but NewDawn India has helped provide a playground for Vidiyal's reception home (see last newsletter) so that the lads are no longer locked inside a building but can at least have the freedom of an outdoor area. Jim has now been invited by the social defence to evaluate the Reception Units of four other districts, not only an honour to the work of Vidiyal but an opportunity to benefit the children who arrive at these units.

DIFFICULT TIMES

Since Easter Vidiyal has gone through a very difficult time. The sudden death of a young mentally handicapped girl hit everyone hard. The little girl had been abandoned and was brought to the Shelter Home about a year ago, being named Priya by the staff. Jim was very grateful for the help of some of the older children in supporting the younger ones through a long evening and night, while Arockiam (Jim's second in command!) dealt with the unpleasant formalities.

This was immediately followed by an outbreak of what turned out to be cholera, resulting in several children needing hospitalisation and the evacuation of the Shelter Home. As we write all the children are now out of hospital but will not be able to return to the Shelter Home until further inspections are carried out.

Life is never dull at Vidiyal, there is always something happening, but sometimes there are events that we would benefit from missing out on!

LATEST NEWS

We are delighted to hear of the safe arrival of a second daughter to Arockiam and his wife Prithiba.

The latest Jolly Camp is underway. There will be rather more outings incorporated this year with the Shelter Home premises out of action and the drop-in main centre being so much smaller. However, staff were determined that the camp should go ahead as it such a highlight in the children's year.

NEWDAWN INDIA

The musical evening held recently proved to be a big success and raised £551. Many thanks to all those who were involved in any way.

The annual cake and plant sale will be taking place on May 8th and we look forward to various other events later in the year. We hope to have a very special guest at our curry evening with Jim Jesudoss himself visiting us.

SPONSORSHIP NEWS

We have about 130 sponsored children at present who benefit from the regular contact and encouragement of their sponsors. We know from visits how important the contact is to the children as the first things they say are "Do you know my sponsor? How is my sponsor?" Just a few lines on a postcard on occasions through the year mean so much. If you are interested in sponsoring please contact 01473 311148 for more details.

We have lost a few children during the year as families have moved away from Madurai. The slum families often tend to be rather nomadic, always in the hope of finding something better somewhere else. Sometimes children are removed from attendance at Vidiyal and school by their parents so that they can go out to earn some money. This is especially common amongst the girls. However we have to hope and pray that the education and opportunities that they have received to date will continue to have a big impact on their future lives.

GIFTS

Please remember our Virtual Gift Brochure which can be accessed on our website: www.newdawnindia.org There is a whole range of gifts which can be bought for that special occasion and will benefit the children of Vidiyal.

We are also looking for sponsors for 3 lap-top computers for students who are going on to Masters' degrees and are finding it very difficult without frequent access to a computer. If you are able to help towards the cost of these please contact us.

E-MAIL

If you are happy to receive further newsletters via e-mail please let us know on info@newdawnindia.org