

Welcome to our 2019 newsletter. Every year is a busy year at Vidiyal and here, at NewDawn, we are tasked with trying to keep pace and to continue raising all the funds we can to allow this good work to continue.

January 2019 saw another trip to Madurai. 10 sponsors headed to India, many not really knowing what to expect and full of excitement mixed with trepidation. This year was the 25th anniversary of Vidiyal-Sakthi as a registered organisation so there was a lot to celebrate. We were met at the airport by Jim, Sharmila and Arockiam, who were accompanied by an excited group of youngsters waiting to greet their sponsors.



*Happy faces greeting us at the airport*

The journey to the hotel was an interesting one for me as I found myself in a vehicle with a driver I didn't know and 6 youngsters chattering away in Tamil. Luckily the eldest lad was able to understand a certain amount of English and found himself having to speak it too. I was impressed with his progress since my last visit and thoroughly enjoyed the journey.

Lunch at the hotel was very much enjoyed by staff and children alike and the youngsters loved being able to return to the buffet again and again. It is really good to see the Dhalit children accepted in this hotel, when they would be turned away from so many other places.

*Sandra Davies*

Some members of the group have kindly agreed to share a few of their thoughts and experiences.

**India 2019** contributed by Elaine Wright

When we decided to visit Vidiyal this year, it was after receiving many requests from our sponsored son who, in every letter that he wrote, wanted to know when we were going to visit him!! At last we were going but we never really thought about the impact that it would have on us. From the moment that we arrived at the airport, we were welcomed everywhere with big smiles, flowers in our hair (well, for the ladies) and lots of requests for photos or 'selfies'. The children adore Jim and the team at Vidiyal and always seemed to be happy whenever we met them. We never saw tears, and they were so well behaved.

We have been sponsoring since about 1995, our first boy leaving at 18 when he got an apprenticeship with a garage. This second boy we sponsored until last summer, when he gained his diploma in Social Work; he now works as a Field Co-ordinator for Vidiyal. Our third sponsored boy was at the Airport with the other sponsored children to greet us.

Whilst there, we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Vidiyal and the children sat through a long afternoon of speeches and presentations before each age group performed dances for us. The nursery group was brilliant!



*The nursery children dancing at the celebration*

At the celebration Jim brought on stage all those who had passed through Vidiyal and were now making their way in life. This was a wonderful moment for me as our first sponsored child was on stage, waving at me, with his wife standing beside him and his three-year-old twins with him. He now has his own garage workshop.

We never thought that we would get the chance to see all three of our sponsored children, plus meet the mother of our second 'son'. We also met the whole family of our newest child and we were all privileged to visit their home in the slum. Imagine my amazement to see photos of us and our grandsons on the wall of their home!



*Elaine and John with their three sponsored lads*

*Elaine continues:*

When we met the children at the beach at Kovalam, some were enjoying playing in the sea for the first time. We visited a lighthouse and a zoo with them, and they were all having a great time. It was a sad moment when we had to leave them all at the park before they set off on their 6 hour bus journey back to Madurai.

Now when I see my photos from Madurai, I can remember being in that place and know that the children feel special and also love to know that you know their sponsors.

**India 2019** contributed by Emma Bowyer

Three months after returning from India, there are several images that are lingering in my mind. You may expect me to say these are of the children we saw, but they aren't. Yes, it was wonderful to see so many children that are benefiting from the many projects and initiatives that Vidiyal is delivering. Their smiles, laughter and dancing were a joy to see, as was their excitement at playing in the sea or with simple beanbags. However, the enduring memory for me is of one of the community elders we spent time with. She spoke of her own childhood and how she had endured daily discrimination; her food was kicked away from her and she was prevented from going to school.

Many years later she was in the main centre singing laments, demonstrating how to put on a sari, and dancing. She spoke to us of her hopes for the children and her longing for them to have the future that she could not have for herself. Her home was in the slum where conditions were similar to those that are brought to us through the television. **We** may have selected sanitation improvements, a direct water supply to the home, clean streets or lighting as the priority. This woman was passionate that the focus should be on the children and young people.



*One of the elders*

We saw for ourselves the very real barrier between the communities that Vidiyal works with and the rest of the city. What we came to see, through the testimony of those we spoke with, was the ongoing discrimination that comes as a result of birth.

I was truly humbled by the commitment shown by the staff, volunteers and families. They are working where I cannot. For example: a woman going into the city to try to stop a child marriage with only a mobile phone and her wisdom as her tools, young people giving hours each day in appreciation of what Vidiyal did for them, and the fathers who took time off work to meet us and show their appreciation for Vidiyal.

I will not forget the image of that elder carrying a baby through the slum to meet us. In that moment the sponsorship and support that you all give to New Dawn all made sense. You give because you, like those of us who had the privilege of visiting this year, know it is making a difference. Each child, each family, each community touched by the work of Vidiyal is being given the opportunity to change their future.



*In the Melavasal slum*





These pictures show the contrast for the Vidiyal children, from their homes in the slum to a beach camp. The sheer and utter joy on the faces of those children makes all the hard work of fund-raising worthwhile. Although a big focus needs to be on education, fun is an important part of everything at Vidiyal.





## Recent news

Three of our girls have received degrees from the vice-principal of their college. This is a huge achievement and these girls will serve as role models in their communities.



*Jim and Sharmila with the three girls at their graduation*

Six of our young people have passed their 12th standard examinations (equivalent to A-level), a 100% pass rate. Three others have completed re-takes so there will be nine students starting degrees or occupation-based courses this month.

Nine children took their 10th standard examination (equivalent to GCSE's) and all passed.

It has been a really successful exam session for the Vidiyal youngsters.

## NewDawn India news

As the work at Vidiyal expands and there are more and more demands for very worthy causes, NewDawn is struggling to keep up with the needs in Madurai. However, we have held some successful fundraising events this year, with our annual curry evening and our regular spring and autumn cake and plant sales. We thank all those of you have helped at or attended these events.

We held a most enjoyable film evening in March. The Methodist Church at Capel St Mary was transformed into a cinema with wide screen and subtle lighting and our thanks go to Starling IT services ([www.starling-it.co.uk](http://www.starling-it.co.uk)) for this. Popcorn, sweets and soft drinks all added to the atmosphere. The film depicted the problems encountered by two boys and their family in the slums of Chennai and gave a real flavour of what life is like for the children supported by NewDawn in nearby Madurai.

Please go to our website [www.newdawnindia.org](http://www.newdawnindia.org) to keep abreast of dates for any forthcoming fundraising events.

## Dates already planned

Saturday 14th September – Cake and Plant Sale at Capel Methodist Church 10am - 12 noon.

Saturday 5th October at the same venue — Annual Curry Evening 7 for 7.30pm. This event is very popular and seats should be reserved by contacting Brenda Sturgeon on 01473 310125 or [sturgeons71@gmail.com](mailto:sturgeons71@gmail.com)

## Easy ways to help us

We are always looking for people to join in the fundraising so, if you would like to hold an event, big or small, please get in touch with us.

However there are two easy ways you can help and that is by using Amazon Smile and Give As You Live when you do your on-line shopping.

It is also helpful if we have an email address we can use for information like this so that we can save on postage. Don't forget to inform us if you change your postal or e-mail address. Contact Sandra Davies [s.e.davies10@gmail.com](mailto:s.e.davies10@gmail.com)



*Children enjoying the opportunity of a beach camp and the view from a lighthouse*

The Vidiyal staff and children would like us to thank you all for the support and encouragement you give them and for enabling the youngsters to take advantage of all the opportunities that Vidiyal offers.

The NewDawn team would also like to say a big thank you to all those who regularly give, in so many different ways, to the present and future of these children.

It is lovely to see the young men and women who have achieved so much and whose lives have been changed with your help.