



American Association for the Social Advancement of India

Helping Others to Help Themselves

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER
Volume 19: December 2024



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AASAI

**American Association for the
Social Advancement of India**

Helping Others to Help Themselves...

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Chairman's Corner:

It gives me great pleasure to communicate with you again via this annual newsletter. At the outset, let me wish a very healthy, prosperous and happy New Year to you and all your loved ones. Starting in 1988, your continued generosity and patronage has resulted in AASAI celebrating 27 years of service to the society in 2024. When we look back, we are overwhelmed with emotion and joy to have been associated with several charities (NGOs) in India, and to be a part of their dedicated service to the needs of the underprivileged in our society.



In the last couple of years, we saw several major emergencies most notably COVID-19 and other natural calamities such as the floods in Tamil Nadu. Several thousands, both privileged and the poor with no exception, faced severe hardship including some among us losing jobs and facing financial strains. Despite all this, you have continued your support to AASAI. As a result, our initiatives at **Athmalayam**, **Voluntary Health Services (VHS)**, **Rehoboth Home**, **Kalanjiyam**, **Shantivanam** and **Siva Shanta Trust** and others have continued to achieve significant progress in their services. Specifically, your support helped fund the following initiatives:

- AASAI Residency and swimming pool at **Athmalayam**, to provide much needed accommodation and hydro-therapy to the special children with Autism disorder and other mental health needs.
- **Rehoboth Home** (home for women in distress) received special training for making an environmentally-certified cleaning product. They supply this product to VHS, enabling the hospital to meet its government-mandated use of environmentally safe cleaning products.
- AASAI continues to fund the corpus fund at **VHS** to provide medical care to Rehoboth, and cervical care screening for women and our initiatives in other associated NGOs.

These are but a few of AASAI-funded initiatives in 2024. This newsletter covers many more of the activities in the NGOs supported by AASAI and details several of their achievements.

Your continued support is essential for these initiatives. We thank Dr. Ramakrishnan (Athmalayam), Ms Zoraida Samuel (Rehoboth Home), Dr. M.C. Vasudevan (VHS), Ms. Lakshmi (Anu) Ramakrishnan (Kalanjiyam), Dr. Usha Mittal (Siva Shantha Trust) and all of the other leaders at NGOs supported by AASAI, for their selfless dedicated service to humanity.

Thank you again, and we are grateful for your support.

L. Raghavan, Chairman, AASAI.

“Money is only unused power. The real purpose of wealth, after food, clothing and shelter, is philanthropy.” - Lean Levy

Quotes by Mahatma Gandhi:

- *“Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”*
- *“Where there is love there is life.”*
- *“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”*

A Note from our President:



It is my privilege and honor to write this brief note. Very likely you are a donor, patron, NGO leader, volunteer and/or beneficiary of the many projects supported by AASAI. No matter which portal you enter, we welcome you to the AASAI family. We wish each of you and everyone in your families a successful end to the year and a Very Happy and Joyful New Year!

Any organization such as AASAI could not exist or function without the support of many volunteers working silently behind the scenes. This year I wish to acknowledge Mr. Mohan Gurunathan from the San Francisco Bay Area, CA. His association and discussions have made this newsletter come alive and vibrant. Special thanks also to Dr. Gopinath, Mr. Logachander, Mrs. Abirami and others.

Our chairman, Mr. Narasimhan Raghavan continues to provide inspiring leadership, made even more effective by his residence in India for at least a few months each year. He has facilitated hands-on training to the residents of one of the NGOs (Rehoboth Home) supported by AASAI for manufacturing eco-friendly cleaning products mandated by GOI regulations. Our special thanks to Mr. Kashyap, President, Paleech. Agrid Scientific LLP, India for his personal engagement and facilitation of this valuable training and skill building for the women at Rehoboth Home, finding pathway for their rehabilitation and sustainable economic progress. We also thank Mr. Dilip Mathur for his support for Sewing Machines at Kalanjiam for use in their Tailoring education and skill building program for rural women. Through this initiative we at AASAI have learned pathways to channel donor funds in India, directly to the NGOs who can benefit from them.

In this annual newsletter you will see updates on many projects through the NGOs supported by AASAI. You will read about the Athmalayam - a special school and its progress. You will see the initiatives at Kalanjiam, health care support through Shiv Santa Trust, and many more. These are just a few examples.

The joy of caring and sharing comes from engagement, participation and contribution. While the need is always large, every little bit helps. There are countless needs we face in our daily life. There are also innumerable organizations across the globe serving the needs of the society. AASAI is only a minuscule part of this whole. With that in mind you are taking the time to identify with AASAI and your support and participation in AASAI efforts and causes is truly amazing! Our sincere thanks to each of you!

Each of us are supported by three pillars: Economic well being, Emotional wellbeing and Intellectual/spiritual well being. As we engage in activities and service in the needs of others – mostly unknown to us in a personal connection – to meet their economic needs, we also uplift their emotional support. These together, through our objectivity and non-attachment, also strengthen our own core in terms of strengthening our intellectual/spiritual strength! Thank you for this opportunity and the journey together.

Best wishes,

Dr. Krishnamoorthy (Subbu) Subramanian
President, AASAI


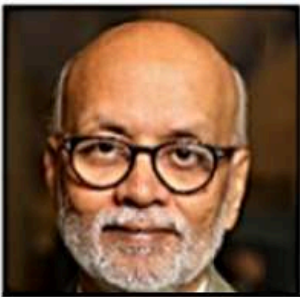
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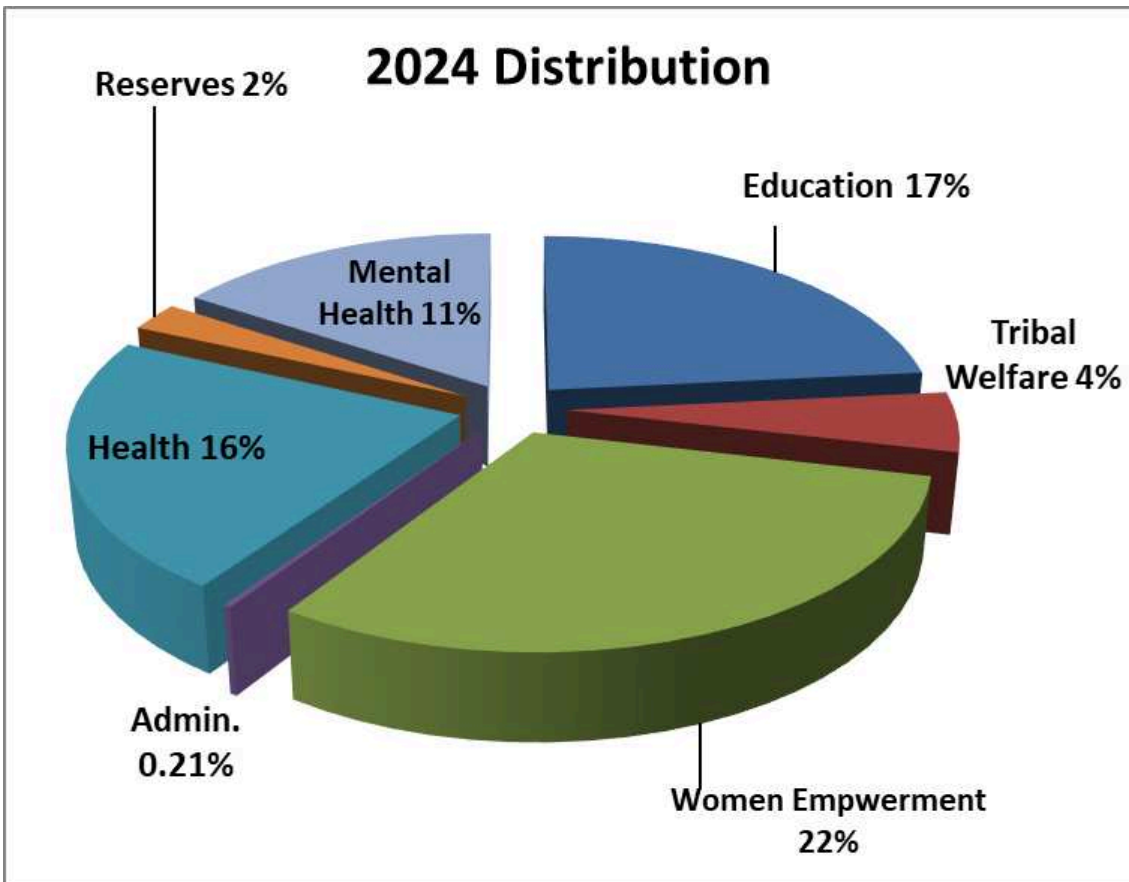
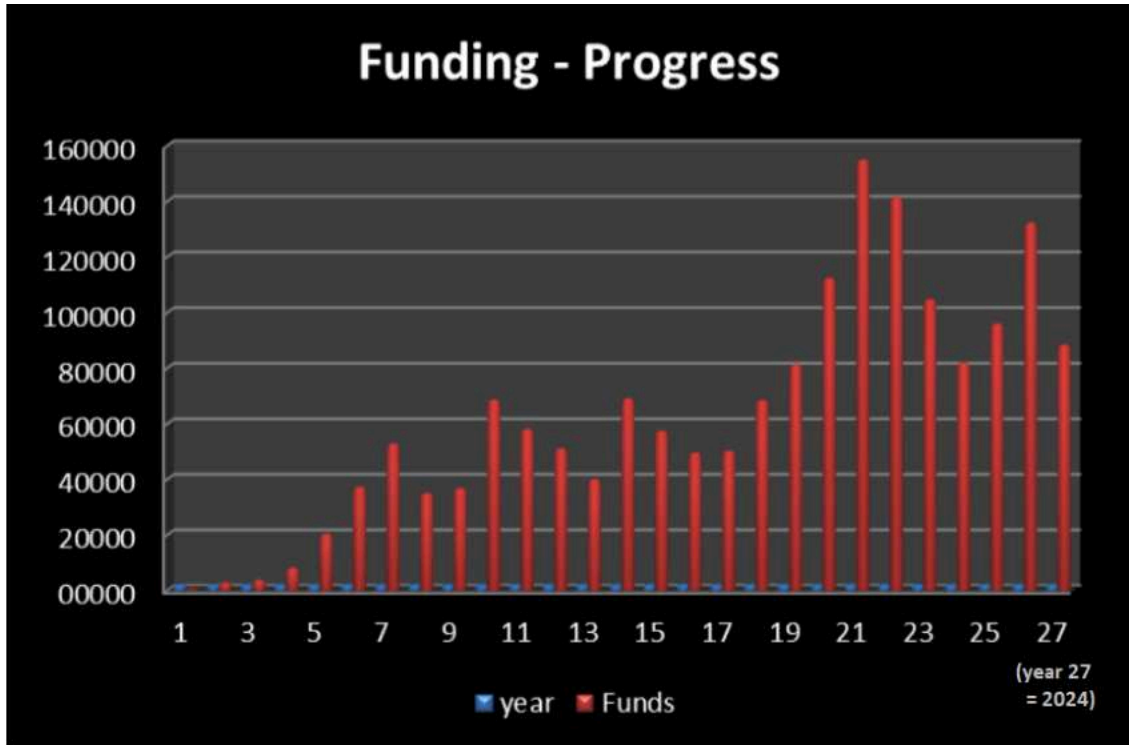
Help others so they can help themselves.

Mission:

- *Let none lack opportunities to excel*
- *Let all have equal access to health care to prosperity*
- *Let elders lead a secure and dignified life*
- *Let all minds realize its full potential*
- *Let women be empowered to lead a life without fear, discrimination and abuse*
- *Let us wipe out tears from every eye*

Board of Directors:

		
<p><i>With Gratitude!</i> Mr. L. (Narasimhan) Raghavan Director (Chairman)</p>	<p><i>Spirituality: Seeing the self in others and others in us!</i> Dr. K. (Subbu) Subramanian President</p>	<p><i>Assisting exemplary individuals positively impact their communities!</i> Dr. C. Gopinath Secretary</p>
		
<p><i>Help others to help themselves!</i> Mr. R. Muralidharan Director</p>	<p><i>Cultivate a spirit of selfless service to know yourself!</i> Mr. Logachander Natarajan Treasurer</p>	<p><i>Uplift & Empower people through Service!</i> Mrs. Abirami Balasubramanian Director, Technology</p>



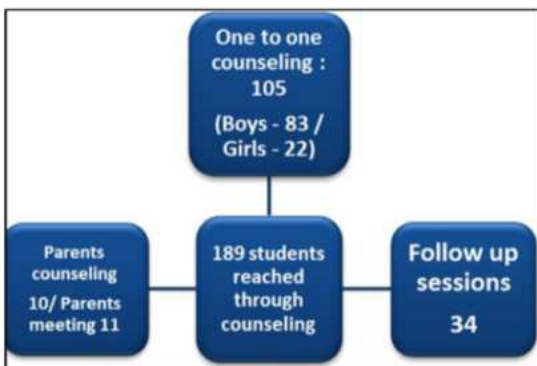


Creating a Better Future for Rural Communities
Kalanjiyam Trust, 3/751 D Greenways Lane, Jayashankar Nagar,
Palavakkam. Chennai 600041, T. Nadu, India
www.kalanjiyam.org



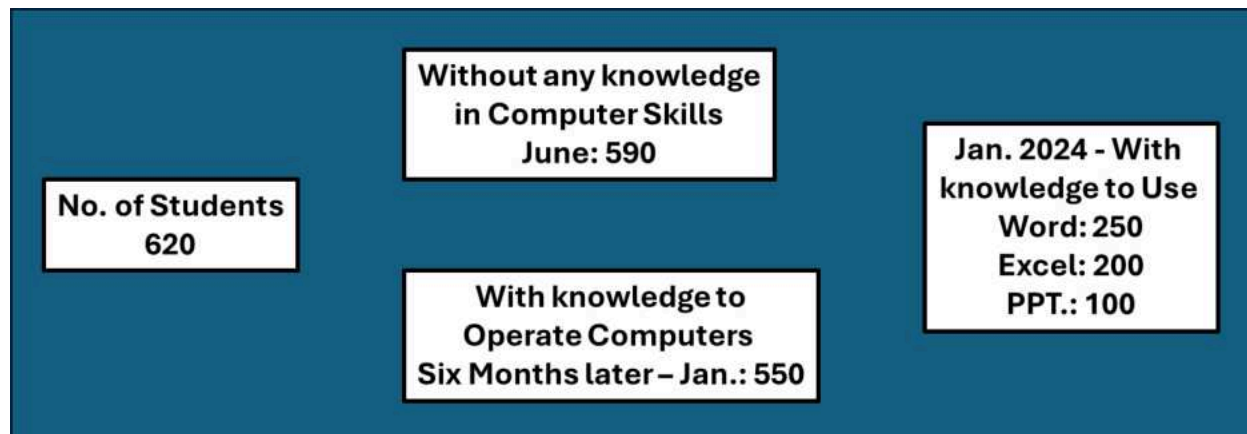
Kalanjiyam is a community and women’s empowerment program which operates in rural communities of Kanchipuram district of Tamil Nadu. Kalanjiyam seeks to empower and mobilize communities to take part in their own development, and organize themselves to ensure quality education, improved health and overall well-being of all their members. A common goal of Kalanjiyam’s programs is to cultivate a sense of community ownership, involvement and responsibility for individual and collective self-improvement. AASAI is proud to support Kalanjiyam and their numerous initiatives for community empowerment.

Kalanjiyam’s Education Programs



Kalanjiyam is presently working with over 2,000 children combined in primary, middle or high / higher secondary schools from 20+ schools.

Kalanjiyam’s Education Programs include counseling, follow up sessions as well as providing para (assistant) teachers to support student learning. Kalanjiyam also provides training and development for the para teachers.



Kalanjiam offers introductory computer skills and software applications training for the rural youth, who do not have access to such tools and their career pathways.

Kalanjiam's Skill Building Programs

Kalanjiam operates several programs that develop practical and life-skills for community members as well as their own staff.

- The **Jyothi Tailoring Center** empowers women with essential tailoring skills, boosting self-confidence and creating avenues for livelihood advancement and economic security.
- **Thalir Academy** focuses on skill development, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship among rural youth and aims to equip youth with employable skills, foster economic empowerment.
- **Staff Development and Welfare:** Kalanjiam prioritizes staff capacity building through training programs and workshops, ensuring they are equipped to address community needs effectively. We also support staff members' welfare through incentives, life insurance coverage, and health and wellness programs, fostering a supportive work environment.



Kalanjiam's Health Care Programs

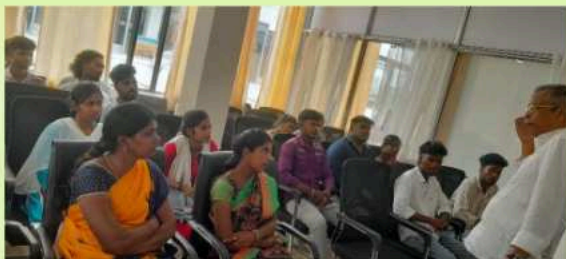
Kalanjiam's Health Program, implemented through the Right Information Community Health (RICH) initiative, is dedicated to addressing healthcare disparities in rural areas of Chengalpattu district. This program is administered through: **Village Health Camps, Child Health Program, Adolescent Health Camps. Maternal Health and Infant and Young Child Feeding, Community awareness programs.** Their **Vanavil Program** increases awareness and understanding of mental health issues and equips youth with life skills to cope with stress and strengthen their mental well-being.

Kalanjiyam Youth Development Initiatives

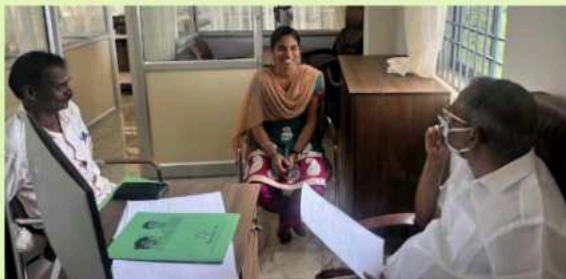
Kalanjiyam conducted a survey across 20 villages in Lattur Block, Chengalpattu District with the aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the youth population aged 13 to 25 years. The primary goal was to identify critical areas where targeted interventions could significantly enhance educational attainment and improve job prospects for these young individuals. To achieve this, the survey focused on capturing detailed demographic profiles, assessing educational engagement levels, analyzing drop-out rates and their underlying causes, evaluating employment outcomes, and providing actionable data to guide effective policy development.

A structured approach was taken, utilizing questionnaires and interviews to collect data from a representative sample of youth across the surveyed villages. The survey delved into various aspects of the youths' lives, including their current educational status, reasons for discontinuing education, and existing employment situations. This approach ensured a thorough and nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the youth in these communities.

The findings revealed that youth comprise 8% of the population in the surveyed villages, with an evenly balanced gender distribution. Educationally, 659 youths were still attending school while 173 were enrolled in college. However, a concerning number of 118 youths had dropped out, with a higher drop-out rate among males compared to females. Employment data showed that only 45% of these drop-outs were employed, leaving a significant 55% unemployed. Even among those who completed higher education, were struggling to find employment that adequately matched their qualifications and skills. These results highlighted an urgent need for targeted interventions aimed at reducing drop-out rates, bridging the gap between education and employment, and creating job opportunities that align more closely with the skills and aspirations of the youth.



In response to these insights, our team took up proactive measures to address the identified challenges. Unemployed youths were individually approached and invited to participate in counselling sessions at Thair Academy, where they received guidance to help plan their future career paths. They were offered opportunities to enrol in skill development programs such as computer training and tailoring courses.



This initiative saw an encouraging response, with 20 youths enrolling in the computer training program and actively participating in it. We are continuing to follow up with the remaining youth to support them in finding suitable employment. This ongoing effort is aimed at ensuring that all the young people in the surveyed villages have the resources and guidance they need to secure meaningful job opportunities and build a brighter future.



These efforts form part of a broader strategy to equip young people with valuable skills and competencies, thereby enhancing their employability and contributing to the overall socioeconomic development of their communities.



Learning how to do button hole stitching

Practicing hemming



Stitching on basic tailoring machine



Rebuilding Hope: A Lifeline to Displaced Irular Families

Kalanjiyam is dedicated to supporting the most marginalized communities, including the Irulars, a tribal community facing significant socio-economic challenges.

Recently, 26 Irular families were displaced from Chennai's OMR area due to land allocation to a corporate entity. Families were transported by lorry overnight, bringing along whatever belongings and household goods they could. They were dropped off at a new location and informed that this would be their new home, all without any prior notice to the leaders in Periya Vellikkadu.



The families were left in a lurch, without a place to call home in an unfamiliar environment. Due to the relocation these families also faced loss of their livelihoods and were left without the support networks or resources they had relied on in Chennai.



In response, Kalanjiyam and the local elected leaders and Periya Vellikkadu community rallied to support these families, helping rebuild homes and providing essential assistance to meet immediate needs.

However, the challenges remain significant. Kalanjiyam's ongoing support focuses on providing household provisions and aiding livelihood improvement, crucial for helping these families rebuild their lives with dignity. Through our coordinated efforts, we aim to offer security and stability, helping them navigate this difficult transition with hope for the future.



Athmalayam

Education and Residential Care for Children with Autism Spectrum and other Mental Health Needs.

[Athma Special School,](https://www.athmalayam.org/index.php)
S.F.No. 317, Ammapettaai,
Opp. JJ Engg. College,
Tiruchirappalli- 620009,
Tamil Nadu
Phone: +91 97881 22221, 80125 22125
<https://www.athmalayam.org/index.php>
athmaspecialschool@gmail.com



The mission of **Athma Special School** is to impart a holistic, multi-disciplined, education & rehabilitation center for children with autism, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, ADHD, Down syndrome, and multiple developmental disabilities. Athma Special School was first established in 2009 in a rented building. In 2014, the foundation for a dedicated facility was initiated, and in 2019 the organization was inaugurated as Athmalayam. Athma Special School operates in a 20,000 sq. ft. facility located in the Ammapettai village, Trichy, Tamil Nadu, and serves the needs of around 70 children. These students mostly come from rural backgrounds and lower income families.

The foundations of our school are compassion, empathy, and love. Our service is very soul-satisfying. Our aim is to enhance and uplift the positive skills of the children with the help of supportive strategies. Our training strategies are structured according to the individual education program (IEP) formulated by the National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped.

We are also here to support and uplift parents of mentally-challenged children, and to help them to see the light in their children's journey.

We are one of few schools in the Trichy district with all specialists under one roof, including special educators, autism specialists, speech therapists, and occupational therapists, who all work with the guidance of psychologists and psychiatrists.

Our children have participated in district, state-level, and national level arts, dance, and athletics competitions that have brought accolades to our school and pride to their parents.

Athma Special School offers the following services:

- Special Education
- Early Intervention
- Speech Therapy
- Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy
- Assessment and Counseling
- Vocational Training

In addition to providing inclusive employment-focused education to students with disabilities, we seek to make Athma Special School a regional resource center for training other professionals. Our hope is that Athma Special School can be a model which is replicated all over India.



AASAI Residential Care Center



With the help of AASAI donors, we have recently constructed a residential facility for 60 students in an adjacent location to Athma Special School. Our goal is to provide housing for around half the number of students who can afford payment for residence. This will in turn help to pay for free residence of thirty additional students, on a need basis. The residential facility is now operational and as of Dec 2024, is providing housing for ten students.

We are deeply thankful to AASAI and their donors for making this residential facility possible.

Notes from Dr. K. Subramanian (President, AASAI) visit to Athmalayam, December 2024:

I was delighted to visit the Athmalayam facilities in Ammapettai village, Trichy in December 2024. Athma school for children with autism and other disabilities is fully functional, with around 70 day students and 10 residential students.

According to Athmalayam director Dr.Ramakrishnan, the school has the capacity to accommodate many more students in both categories, The school has a spacious learning room and many other facilities. Students are trained in many ways to gain life skills including the ability to function as best as they can as productive members of the society.

Most day students get picked up in the morning by a caravan of three buses operated by the school. The school runs from 10 AM to 3:30 PM to allow for sufficient time for students to reach home while enduring the afternoon city traffic. Children participate in a variety of competitions, and they often place first or second according to Dr. Ramakrishnan. These events also create awareness of the school and its many resources. In addition to their many services, Athma school has also opened a pool to offer aqua training/therapy for the students.

The residential facility funded by AASAI is now in its early stages of operations, housing about ten residents. *“It is a concerted effort to get the project off the ground, since the requirements to be met are severe with many regulations, but the effort is worth it in the end, as it is towards a very large unmet need in our population,”* says Dr. Ramakrishnan.



Aqua Therapy Pool



Residential facility



Resident and his art work



Athma Special School

Shanthivanam

Rehabilitation Center for the Mentally Ill and Destitute

Shantivanam is a residential facility for recovery and rehabilitation of persons with mental illness, located in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. The facility is operated by the TRUST NGO and offers care and treatment for over 120 residents. AASAI is proud to have supported Shantivanam's programs across several years.



Notes from Dr. K. Subramanian (President, AASAI) visit to Shantivanam, December 2024:

My visit was hosted by Dr. K. Ramakrishnan, Director of the NGO, along with Mr. Arasappan and Mr. Rajendran, valuable members of the TRUST staff. Shantivanam serves to identify persons who are mentally ill and destitute, who end up alone, homeless, and often living in public places like bus or train stations. Shantivanam staff reach out to these persons, invite them to their residential facility, and provide them care and treatment leading to their recovery. Whenever possible, Shantivanam tries to reunite these individuals with their families. This reunification can be a challenge in many cases. "Last year, we reunited over 20 patients with their families," said Dr. Ramakrishnan. He added that the reunification has been better in recent years, since many patients are only in the early stages of mental illness, and the improvement in their condition after treatment makes the families more willing to accept the reunification.

Over the years, AASAI has funded several projects at Shantivanam. Most projects have been a success, while some have had mixed results. This has been a learning process for both sides. AASAI has funded the "Areca nut" project, which is an on-site dish-making project at Shantivanam. This project has been a big success, according to Dr. Ramakrishnan. AASAI has also funded a goshala (cow sanctuary) at Shantivanam, which provides care for cows, milk for the patients, cow dung and biogas for cooking, and fertilizer for gardening. The goshala project has had mixed success. On the plus side, it provides sufficient milk to meet the needs of the 120 residents of the Shantivanam facility. The cow dung fertilizer project is also going quite

well, according to Mr. Arasappan. However, the biogas production facility has not fared well, since the underground tanks were washed out during recent flooding in the area.

Below are a few images from this visit.



Arecanut Project and a few beneficiaries



Shantivanam residents and staff at the facility

Any large residential facility requires a large kitchen, large quantity of supplies and industrial-sized equipment like the chutney maker shown in the images! In many respects running an NGO like this is a large effort, requiring many operations and different skills! That was a big eye opener for me during this visit!



Images from the kitchen at Shantivanam.

Siva Shantha Trust

Free Healthcare for Underserved Communities

Siva Shantha Trust operates two clinics in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, dedicated to providing free, high-quality healthcare to underprivileged communities. Our Pediatric Clinic in Nesapakkam serves children, newborns, and new mothers, while our Adult Clinic in Chetpet offers a wide range of medical services, including specialized care in Pediatrics, Cardiology, Psychiatry, Dentistry, and Siddha medicine. All services, including medications and immunizations, are provided at no cost. We also cover hospitalization expenses when the need arises.

Adult Clinic (Chetpet)

The 2024 year started on a positive note. Dr. Kavya Somesh joined our adult clinic on January 2nd. Dr. Kavya is an internist with special training in Diabetology. This is particularly valuable for our clinic, as many of our adult patients suffer from diabetes, hypertension, and/or various cardiac conditions.



Our adult services cater mainly to the elderly population, many of whom suffer from chronic problems needing long term care. Our clinic cardiologist, Dr. S. Shanmugasundaram, is a very well known cardiologist in Chennai. He has been consulting at our clinics since 2002. We also have Dr. Padmavati who is the Director of SCARF - a well known psychiatric institution in India and internationally. She has been providing mental health services at our clinics since 2004. Our dental services are provided by Dr. Vidhya Prakash, who joined us in 2002. Dr. Ranjit and Dr. Mittal are pediatricians who take care of the younger patients. Dr. Kumar Raju provides Siddha medicine for those who want to try alternate therapy for certain ailments.

In September, we offered a dental camp at our Adult clinic in Chetpet. This is the third dental camp we have held over the years. Dr. Vidhya Prakash and Dr. Venkat Prasad consulted and treated all the patients. Forty patients registered, and all were seen the same day. Half of them received treatments, and the other half were scheduled to be treated at our clinic over the next few weeks. Treatments ranged from simple teeth cleaning, fillings and extractions, to root canal treatment and dentures.



Pediatric Clinic (Nesapakkam)

Our Pediatric clinic provides essential medical care for children, newborns, and new mothers. An important component of our services includes providing vaccinations. We administer all the necessary vaccines, including those which are not given in the government programs. For new mothers, we provide regular counseling services, which is important to support their well-being and that of their child. It brings us special joy to see our pediatric patients come back to us as new mothers, and continue to trust our services for their own babies.



Milk Program

Under our 'Milk Program,' school children are given a glass of milk and a multivitamin tablet daily. This is an after-school program for children in the vicinity of the clinics. On festive occasions, we provide them a special added treat.



Overall Summary for 2024

Overall, we saw around 5500 outpatients for the 2024 year. Of these, we hospitalized 14 patients for various illnesses. The reasons for hospitalization include: angiograms, angioplasty, surgical removal of ovarian tumour, febrile illnesses, respiratory problems, and other various surgeries. The cardiac and surgical admissions are particularly complicated and expensive, and we truly appreciate the kind support of our donors to enable these life-saving treatments.

Our Thanks to AASAI

Thanks to the generous support of AASAI, we are able to offer essential medical services that would otherwise be inaccessible to our patient population. What makes our service so valuable is that we bring free, high quality medical care to the doorsteps of the communities we serve. In addition, we provide hospitalizations when necessary, in partnership with the best private hospitals. CHILDS Trust Hospital was voted the best pediatric hospital in this part of the world, and Billroth Hospital is at the forefront for cardiac care. All the medications we give are of the best quality from respected pharmaceutical companies. With the help of AASAI, we are proud and honored to be able to provide such a high level of care for the underprivileged sections of society.



Sincerely,

Dr. Usha Mittal, Temple of Service, Siva Shantha Trust.

Rehoboth Home

Empowering Women, Restoring Dignity

Founded in 1998, Rehoboth Home is a Public Charitable Trust committed to rescuing and rehabilitating women in distress. Our mission is to provide a sanctuary where women, particularly those suffering from mental illness or extreme poverty, can heal, regain their dignity, and reintegrate into society with a renewed sense of purpose.



At Rehoboth, we welcome women who are mentally ill, destitute, and abandoned, many of whom are found wandering the streets, struggling to survive. Tragically, poverty and the stigma surrounding mental health often lead to the rejection of these women by their families. Left homeless, they become vulnerable to starvation, health issues, and abuse and exploitation by others. Women in particular face especially great risks in such circumstances.

One of the approaches or working models for AASAI is “Velocity and Impact” (i.e.) Through emphasis on networking, everyone’s contribution and sustainability, we can achieve a larger impact of our donor’s contributions and meet the needs of our partner NGOs rapidly and as much as possible. For more details, see www.AASAI.org “Rehoboth Home has joined hands with VHS to reach out to these underprivileged. The new rehabilitation initiatives have been encouraging to both our women and the team”, says Mrs. Zoraida Samuel, head of this NGO.

Tailoring: Bed Sheets and Pillow covers for VHS.

As part of their rehabilitation, the women cared for at Rehoboth Home are engaged in several vocational activities. This helps them in their recovery as well as developing positive feelings about themselves as useful members of society. Tailoring is one such vocational activity, where these resident women learn and participate by stitching a variety of items including gift bags, linens and bed sheets, etc.



1000 bed sheets and pillow covers are being stitched with the screen printing of both the logos on the linen by the women at Rehoboth of VHS. This effort has been encouraging for the women and our vocational rehabilitation tutors to start on a big project with basic skill application

Our heartfelt thanks to both AASAI and the VHS team for the support.



Eco friendly Bio-Floor cleaner: Product Training, Production and Distribution

The bio-floor cleaner preparation training was received with generous help and support from Mr. Kashyap and his “Paleech” product unit. The training was facilitated with help and contacts from AASAI. Today, a team of five women at our shelter (residential facility) are involved in production and distribution. Rehoboth has been supplying 200 liters of floor cleaner to Voluntary Health Services for the past 4 months.





Eco-friendly Floor Cleaner produced by women at Rehoboth Home.

A Path to Independence and Empowerment

Rehoboth Home offers more than just shelter; we provide hope and the tools for transformation. Through our community-based rehabilitation program, **Kudumbham**, we guide these women toward independence and reintegration into society.



Kudumbham: A Family-Oriented Rehabilitation Program

The **Kudumbham** program creates a nurturing, family-like environment where women live in compatible groups, practice life skills, and gain valuable work experience. Participants are employed in various projects at Rehoboth and receive a small remuneration, allowing them to become financially independent and responsible.

Guiding principles of Kudumbham include:

- Identify women ready for independence and eventual reintegration into the community
- Form supportive, family-like units based on compatibility and backgrounds
- Provide meaningful work and a regular income through Rehoboth's initiatives
- Offer housing units that help women learn to live independently

AASAI has provided funds and guidance in the construction of Kudumbham housing units, which are now used to house the rehabilitated women on their journey towards self-sufficient and independent living.

Pudhumai Store: A Platform for Creativity and Dignity

Since 2012, Pudhumai Store, our local thrift store, has provided a space for the women of Rehoboth to serve the community and showcase their talents. The store sells donated home goods, clothes, and appliances, along with handicrafts created by the women themselves. This not only provides a steady income but also uplifts their self-esteem and sense of dignity.

Through Pudhumai, women can see the value in their work and creativity, which boosts their confidence and empowers them to take charge of their lives.



Pudhumai Thrift Store at Rehoboth Home.

A Heartfelt Thank You

We are deeply grateful to AASAI for their continuing support for Rehoboth’s mission to uplift our women and provide them a life of dignity, independence, and purpose.

“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.” - Mother Teresa



THE VOLUNTARY HEALTH SERVICES

Voluntary Health Services (VHS) is a non-profit medical center based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The hospital was inaugurated in 1961 by the first Prime Minister of India – Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, renowned Agricultural Scientist is the President of VHS.

VHS offers affordable medical care services to people belonging to poorer backgrounds and low income groups based on their health care needs rather than their ability to pay. VHS approaches health care from a holistic perspective laying emphasis on disease prevention, health promotion, fostering and serving the family as a unit, actively promoting community participation and providing affordable care.

VHS also pioneered the model of Mini Health Centers with the aim of providing primary health care services to the poor near their place of residence and promoting community health through trained health workers from within the community.

VHS has been at the forefront of managing comprehensive community health and STI / HIV prevention programs for marginalized populations, sexual minorities and deprived groups. Backed by nearly 20 years of wide ranging experiences in implementing HIV / AIDS prevention, care and support programs, building the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and training health care providers, VHS has built a reputation for understanding and addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities.



AASAI has been honored to support VHS for the past 15 years.

AASAI's initiatives with VHS include:

- Providing free medical treatment to the women of **Rehoboth Home**, as well as poor patients from Kelaniya supporting areas
- Providing free hospital linens, surgical garments and other fabrics (patient gown, surgeon gowns, towels, leggings, scrub suits, nurses uniforms, etc.) which are stitched by women tailors at AASAI partners **Kalanjiyam** and **Rehoboth Home**
- Providing free bio-friendly floor cleaner product which is produced by women of **Rehoboth Home**
- Opening of a new women's general ward
- "Medical Aid Plan" which provides free master medical checkups for young women
- Partial support to the modular infectious disease treatment facility
- Aid for purchasing of medical equipment

- Concrete platform for prefabricated ward at VHS
- Early detection screening for breast cancer and cervical cancer, in partnership with OBG department of Omayal Achi College of Nursing



REPORT ON CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

As a part of cervical cancer screening project funded by American Association for Social Advancement of India, Department of OBG of Omayal Achi College of Nursing conducted a screening camp on 31th August, Saturday 2024. The camp was conducted at Omayal Achi Health Center, Arakkambakkam among females between the age group of 30-60 years.

Screening for cervical cancer was done by Dr. Amutha.T, HOD, Dept of OBG, along with Prof. Beulah Jayaselvi. J and Team. The screening was done from 9.30 am to 2.00 pm. Detailed history was collected by the students using a risk assessment tool during registration. Health education was given regarding cervical and breast cancer through video shows. After this breast and cervical examination was done. A total of 25 women were registered for cervical cancer screening.

- 11 women had leucorrhoea
- 1 woman had cervical erosion
- 1 woman had uterine prolapse
- 1 woman had cervicitis
- 1 woman had urethral infection
- 1 woman required T removal
- 9 women remaining were with healthy cervix

Based on the findings, treatment was given at free of cost for all clients.

Below is a Letter of Thanks from Dr. M.C. Vasudevan, VHS Central Committee, to AASAI Donors:

Dear AASAI Supporters,

We hope this message finds you well. As we reflect on our ongoing efforts to support the underprivileged, we would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of you, our generous donors and partners.

This month, we are proud to highlight the significant contributions made by AASAI to VHS (Volunteer Health Services). Thanks to the unwavering support from our donors, we have provided essential items, including 750 linens (bed sheets and pillow covers) and OT scrubs for our dedicated medical staff, including surgeons and nurses. Additionally, we supply 225 liters of eco-friendly disinfectant every month, free of cost, to ensure a safe and sterile environment for our patients. These items are produced by destitute women residents at Rehoboth Home, after their rehabilitation. Rehoboth Home is another NGO also supported by AASAI.

These efforts have directly benefited those in need. Recently, we have been able to assist three patients with epilepsy and two with dermatological issues at Rehoboth Home. Such collaboration across NGOs for mutual support and benefit is a key feature of AASAI initiatives. Your support is making a tangible difference in the lives of these individuals, and we cannot thank you enough.

Thank you once again for your continued support. Together, we are helping to up-lift the poor and needy in our community.

- Dr. M. C. Vasudevan, Neurosurgeon, Department of Neurology, VHS (The Institute of Neurological Sciences – TINS), SH 49A, Pallipattu, Tharamani, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. 600113

Kaigal Education and Environment Program (KEEP)

An Initiative from the Foundation for Education, Ecology, and Livelihood

Krishnamurti Foundation, India

Kaigal, Thottakanam Post, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh

<https://www.thevalleyschool.info/beyond-academics/keep/>

The **Kaigal Education and Environment Program (KEEP)** was started in the year 2002. It consists of a Conservation Center in Kaigal, a village on the fringes of the Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh. The Center consists of afforestation sites, a Seed Bank, a Forest Nursery, an Educational Resource Center and a Training Center. It is located in a beautiful forested land, with the Kaigal river flowing through.



KEEP's main activities are in the following areas:

- Conservation of the forest and its biodiversity
- Research in ecology and conservation by establishing linkages with premier research institutions
- Education for the children of the tribal communities
- Providing livelihood opportunities for the tribal communities
- Kaigal Trust Self-Help Group: a livelihood enterprise for women and youth from the surrounding communities.
- Environmental education

The education provided to the community's children, along with the livelihood program, has empowered a large segment of the community with a greater sense of self-worth and confidence, allowing them to function more effectively in society.

If you lose touch with nature, you lose touch with humanity. - J Krishnamurti

2023-2024 Update

This year, the KEEP program entered its 21st year of operations. The program at Kaigal now caters to 42 children in our two schools and 118 children in our three learning centers. We have 4 full-time teachers in our schools and 6 part-time teachers for our learning centers. Ten environment education programs were conducted with 6 schools and approximately 280 participants.

In collaboration with the Native Plant Restoration and Conservation center “Satvan” in The Valley School, KEEP has contributed towards initiating an indigenous-plant nursery and a seed library within the campus.

Sanctuary Schools and Learning Centers

During this period, we focused on improving our Sanctuary School children’s exposure to multiple subject areas, including science, mathematics and English. The following were some of our activities.

- Students and teachers created a butterfly garden inspired by a visit to the Butterfly Park in Bangalore, growing butterfly-host plants and feeders.
- Teachers enriched Environmental Science and English lessons by adopting methods such as read-aloud stories, video teaching, and activities for reading, writing, and comprehension. Students also worked on book reviews and skits to enhance their skills.
- Geometry and measurement modules were introduced, with activities where children measured time and lengths of objects using both standard and non-standard methods.
- A 3-day Science Exploration Camp was held for National Science Day, allowing students and teachers to explore, observe, and discuss topics like life, air, and water.
- Students and teachers visited the Agastya Foundation's science center in Kuppam, exploring science models and library resources. After-school sessions for older students focused on math practice and English support.
- Children participated in an online bird introduction course, expanding their knowledge by observing birds in different environments.
- An academic performance review in April showed students reading, writing, and speaking at grade-appropriate levels, with older students reading English fluently. Two children joined a local government school, and 44 children were enrolled for 2024-25 at the Sanctuary Schools.



Environmental Education and Conservation

This year, 10 Environment Education Programs were conducted across schools like Advaya Shaale, Good Earth School, Siksha Montessori School, The Valley School, and The Valiants Academy, involving around 250 children and 27 teachers. The programs included activities such as interviewing farmers about changing farming practices, working in the forest nursery, participating in land care at the Conservation Center, and engaging with children in the Sanctuary Schools.

A small team from Kaigal, led by Dr. Sudha, has been collecting and processing seeds for the NPRC center Seed and Germ-plasm Bank at The Valley School, Bangalore. The team has gathered seeds from over 150 native species and grown saplings of more than 170 species, carefully selecting appropriate treatment and germination methods for each.

Additionally, a research team from Teachers' College, Columbia University, USA visited the Kaigal Conservation Centre and the Sanctuary Schools to engage with tribal communities and schools, gaining insights into the conservation and education efforts of KEEP.



Contributions to the Education Space

Jayapalappa, the Headmaster and Education Coordinator, along with other teachers, submitted an abstract to the Annual Conference of Computational Thinking in Schools, organized by CSPathshala and ACM India. The abstract highlighted how integrating local environmental studies into education can achieve goals in language development, problem-solving, and computational thinking. Jayapalappa also presented a paper on creating a land-use map, demonstrating how this activity incorporates computational thinking through design, planning, and documentation. His presentation was well-received, and the conference allowed him to interact with teachers and the Commissioner of Andhra Pradesh Tribal Schools Society.

Sriranjani has contributed to the "*Ennum Ezhuthum*" Curriculum Committee for Mathematics in Tamil Nadu, helping develop materials for primary school children. Many of the Sanctuary Schools' approaches, which integrate the outdoor environment into the core curriculum, have been shared with the Tamil Nadu Education Department.

Outcomes

We are proud to announce that KEEP schools have now completed 20 successful years of operation, continuing to thrive with strong community support. We are now recognized for our innovative teaching approaches by both the teaching community and the School Education Department.

The schools have also played a role in fostering social stability in the villages. Many of our former students have returned to work with children in the Sanctuary Schools and Learning Centers, showing the potential for sustainable educational improvements within the community.

Additionally, the establishment and rapid growth of a Native Plant Nursery and Seed Bank at The Valley School in Bangalore has been a significant achievement. It has attracted a growing number of volunteers eager to contribute to the conservation efforts.



Plans for 2024-2025

In the coming year, we plan to focus our efforts on the following areas:

- Strengthen English learning programs, with a focus on improving reading in our schools and Learning Centers.
- Prioritize digital learning for older students in Government Primary Schools attending Learning Centers, supporting them to complete their schooling successfully.
- Create a Resource Repository of materials developed and piloted in the schools, to serve as a model for similar initiatives elsewhere.
- Integrate the Social Science curriculum with students' contexts, promoting awareness of local issues and solutions.

Sending our Thanks



We are grateful for the generous support of AASAI and their donors to help improve the livelihood of our communities, in line with KEEP's mission.

Donating to AASAI

We respectfully solicit your kind support for AASAI and all the NGOs we support.

Please send any contributions by check(s) payable to **AASAI**. Please mention the NGO name if you are contributing towards a specific project. Otherwise the contributed amount may be used by AASAI for projects and programs with most need. Email us with any questions at: mail4aasai@gmail.com

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5925 Hillview Ave
San Jose, CA 95123, USA

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(END OF NEWSLETTER)