



NewDawn India Newsletter

March 2021

NewDawn India Trustees' update

Early this year, Peter Ellis retired from his role as a trustee. We would like to thank him for all he has contributed through many years. The present trustees are Neville Cooper (Founder), Sandra Davies, Sally Ann Wells, Brenda Sturgeon, Elaine Gotts and Emma Bowyer.

Thank you to everyone who has supported NewDawn through taking part in the Winter Quiz or buying virtual gifts for Christmas. This, together with your regular prayer and financial support, is really appreciated, especially with the lack of "live" fund-raising. Our current on-going event is the Lent appeal but look out for other distanced events to follow.

Legacies

Would you like to leave a gift to NewDawn India in your Will? This would help to ensure the continuation of our life-changing work with the street and slum children of southern India. The process is quite simple, particularly when you are making or updating your will. If you are using the services of a solicitor or other professional, he or she will be familiar with the appropriate wording. Otherwise, a short paragraph in the Will along the following line will be suitable: "I bequeath to NewDawn India, of 10 Coomers, Capel St. Mary, Ipswich IP9 2EY (registered charity No. 1001535) the sum of £..... for their work with the street children of southern India". Any such legacy to a registered charity will be free of Inheritance Tax and not liable to Capital Gains Tax or Income Tax.

Updates from Vidiyal

We have continued to have regular updates from Jim during the Covid epidemic and we thought we would share some of the more recent ones with you now.

November 2020

Jim reports:

"Madurai looks very normal but still there are a few live cases of Covid infection. Most of the parents of our children have gone back to work but life in the neo normal phase is very tough for them as the price hike hit everyone so badly. Some of them are still jobless as the hotels and other tourism related work hasn't resumed yet. I am pleased to let you know that we could raise 300 relief kits through donatekart an online platform and distributed to them in the community. Everyone appreciated this gesture as it helps them from starvation (especially deprivation of children of their basic needs) and prevents them from the hands of money lenders."



We also received news of a number of children taking part in child rights events via Zoom, representing their communities to groups such as the National Action & Coordination Group for Ending Violence Against Children, India. One of the Vidiyal children was selected as the representative of children from South India.

Jim says:

"Two children participated in a state level Children's Consultation on preparing demands by Dalit and tribal children for the forth coming state assembly elections. Both of them contributed a lot to the process and we prepared and submitted the children's election demands to the network. As you know we believe in child participation and this recognition for our children adds strength to our work and children become empowered as they advocate for children's rights in the wider arenas.

I take this opportunity to thank you very much for your continued support and encouragement in our work among the most marginalized children."



December

On 28th December sponsors and supporters were invited to join the celebration of the marriage of Jim and Sharmila's son, Jess, to Helen. Over 2,500 people joined the happy event, either in person or by video. This provided a fascinating insight into Indian culture and it was good to see sponsor children and their families at the event.



Further updates from Jim

January 2021



“Here in India also there is a vaccination programme kicked off but people are fearing to take it fearing side effects. But life is quite normal and schools for 10th and 12th standards have been opened on the 19th. There is no news for other students.

The happy news is that we have decided to have a small celebration of our 27th anniversary just with 100 people including our children, volunteers, staff and a few alumni at our campus at Muthupatti. Vidiyal's anniversaries used to be a community celebration and our families very much wanting to be included.

I am also happy to let you know that we had a simple Pongal celebration with distribution of a sweet box and a full length sugar cane to our children. Children very much appreciated this gesture.

Thanks again for your support and encouragement in our journey down the years.”



February

“I am happy to let you know that today we distributed 85 relief kits worth Rs.400 each (biscuits, rusks, washing soaps and bathing soaps, towel and a ever silver vessel - which they use it to buy food items) elderly (76 grannies and 9 grandpas) living in slums. We couldn't organize a feast because of the restrictions but reached them with a kit which they all appreciated. At Muthupatti they came to the centre to receive their kits and thanked NewDawn for the love and compassion on them. At Melavasal like last time our volunteers and staff members reached the elderly and delivered the kits. Everyone appreciated this gesture. I am enclosing a few photos for you. Thanks for this timely support.”



Note:-

You may notice in the picture above that the lady does not have a top under her sari. We were told, on one of our visits, that this is because she is of such low caste that, in the past, she was not entitled to wear one. Although the caste system no longer officially exists, the Vidiyal communities still feel the impact of the system.



March

“Warm greetings to you from the Vidiyal family.

It's been a while since I wrote a common email to you and I planned to send this to cheer your spirits. I am sure you will be happy to see the enclosed photographs which give so much hope in the present situation. It's amazing to note that our enrolment in the Child Education Centres have gone over 350 during this lockdown period and on an average 280 to 300 children attend the centres regularly. We have renamed our Child Resource Centres as Child Education Centres fitting the new norms developed by our government. As you know education is the big and only hope for most of our children and the pandemic has stalled their development to a larger extent. The communities are looking at Vidiyal as the only hope in the present situation.



Another volunteer giving lessons in one of the Melavasal centres.



One of the amazing Vidiyal volunteers conducting lessons for the younger children of Ambethkar Nagar.

Yesterday our government announced that schools will be closed for 9th to 11th standards again. They opened schools for these higher classes only recently and for 9th standard they started classes only last week. Children are very disappointed. Now there is some news about the second wave in some parts of the country which is a cause of concern. We are persevering to sustain the interest of children through various creative means and our staff and volunteers are of great support.



Some of the older children studying at the Main Centre in Melavasal.

I have one more piece of happy news for you. Now we have got one more space inside Melavasal Slum (which is the biggest in Madurai and biggest among our other partnering communities) which we call Melavasal IV. This makes our number of centres to 9. We are very thankful to the community for this kind gesture and very well see God's hand in making this initiative coming through. Praise be with God. If possible please share these photos with our NewDawn community to cheer them and inform them about the present status of our work."

Note:-

The volunteers are young people who have grown up being supported by Vidiyal and NewDawn India and their sponsors continue to support them as they study for degrees and qualifications. In their free time they give back to Vidiyal by running the children's centres, under the supervision of the Vidiyal staff.

It would be impossible for Vidiyal to function without the dedication of these young people.

We complete our update with a picture to make everyone smile.

