

# Pudiyador Times

Issue 1  
Dec 2009



## Welcome to the first issue of Pudiyador Times!

It's finally here - we are very happy to present the very first edition of the Pudiyador Newsletter! Many thanks to everyone who contributed to making this newsletter a reality. There are a lot of exciting stories coming up, and so, we are going to keep this introduction very short.

As some of you might know, *pudiyador*, in the language spoken by our kids, means "something new". The folks behind the Pudiyador project are planning a makeover for the New Year to provide the kids with more interesting and fun experiences... a *pudiyador* Pudiyador is in the works!



### Plans for 2010

- Pudiyador's academic modules will focus more on children in grades 1 through 5, and we will strive to keep the teacher-student ratio below 1:10.
- Our co-curricular programs will be more structured: every child at Pudiyador will have an opportunity to participate in at least five activities from among painting/drawing/sculpture, theater, instrumental/vocal music, classical/folk dance, and team/individual sports.
- Each community center will be staffed with at least three academic teachers and five co-curricular teachers.
- Prof. Narayanan, who has been guiding Pudiyador for the last 8 years, will now be joined by our Chief Operating Officer, Mr. J. Sethumadhavan.
- The weekly medical clinic will expand to all three communities (currently operating only at Vannandurai).
- Pudiyador will continue to collaborate with other organizations (such as Deepam, Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, and Bhumi) to provide access to counseling services, computer skills, yoga, spoken English, vocational training, and women's empowerment programs.

More details can be found on page 8. We hope you enjoy our first newsletter. Please do send your comments and suggestions to [info@pudiyador.org](mailto:info@pudiyador.org)

Best wishes for the New Year from all of us at the Pudiyador family!

Sincerely,

Manickam Narayanan  
Co-founder





## Meet our volunteers!

*These wonderful people do so much behind the scenes for Pudiyaador, but hardly speak about it. In the spirit of யாம் பெற்ற இன்பம் பெருக இவ்வையகம் (may the world experience our joys), we will feature two volunteers in every issue of Pudiyaador Times. We are proud and honored to feature our dear friends Edel, a star volunteer, and Wateez, a dedicated donor, in this issue.*



### Dr. Edel Devanesan



*Dr. Edel Devanesan is a trained surgeon, but her love for writing has led her to be an editor at a Web solutions firm in Chennai, India. She also teaches Cuban salsa dancing, runs a movie club, spends time with her two adorable dogs and volunteers for Pudiyaador. Here, she talks to us about her involvement with Pudiyaador.*

*How did you get involved with Pudiyaador?*  
As a practicing Christian, I'm required to do something for the less privileged on a regular basis. I used to volunteer earlier at a home for the elderly, but had to stop due to unforeseen circumstances in January 2009. So, I was looking for something to get involved with, when a friend pointed me to Pudiyaador. I came, I saw, I stayed.

*"I've never worked with children before; for a very good reason – they intimidate me!"*

*How often do you visit Pudiyaador? Please describe your typical day (or evening) at Pudiyaador.*  
I visit the Vannandurai Pudiyaador on Saturdays and run a community clinic. I make home visits regularly to keep an eye on those who are ill. Currently, I'm trying to stock a pharmacy in an effort to draw more patients to the clinic. This will encourage more parents to send their children to Pudiyaador as well.



The clinic runs routine blood checks and has conducted an eye-camp for the children. Many children are in need of glasses to correct their vision. We plan to give them vitamins for a three-month period and then repeat their blood tests after that. Some of the children are quite obviously malnourished and anemic.

Over the past couple of months, I've seen a rapport grow between me and the girls. Not that the boys are any less amazing. They look forward to our weekly appointments and I have bonded with them as a friend too. Etiquette classes and sex education classes [for the older children] have also been planned.

I would like to mention a few of my friends who have visited and spent time with the children.

Prasanna, another doctor, took all the children to her hospital for a complete general, dental and eye check-ups. She also conducts group counseling sessions for the older girls. It is wonderful to see the girls speak openly and confidently during these interactions. Manoj, a musician, and I are trying to organize a guitar concert at Pudiyaador. We are really keen on starting guitar classes too. Shrini, a movie actor, conducted an hour-long acting session with the children a few months ago, which was a lot of fun. Niel has bought Pudiyaador three chess sets and has promised to teach the children to play a mean game of chess.

Tanveer, a leading interior decorator in Chennai, visited the Vannandurai center, and has come up with fabulous ideas to spruce up the place. The goal is to encourage: (a) the children to be more careful of the premises and the things in it (there is an appalling lack of respect for public property and I believe that this will change when they are involved in doing the place up); (b) more children to come in; and (c) the ones who do come regularly to stay longer. Preeta Suresh teaches painting to the children and will be helping me in painting wall murals. The goal is to get the place done up before Pongal (January 2010).

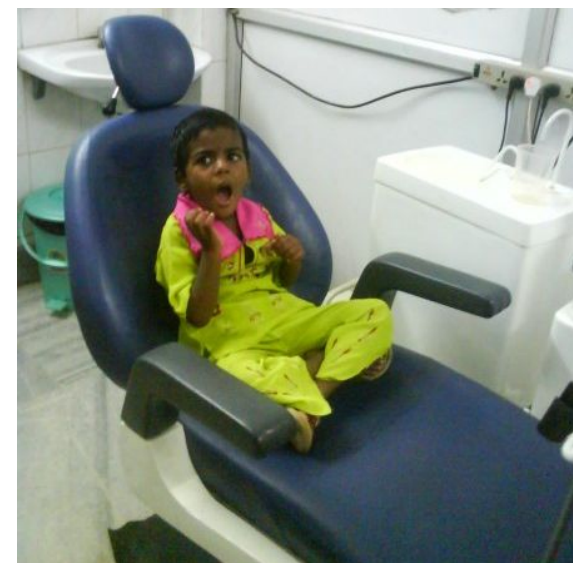
There is a vacant plot of land opposite Pudiyaador that looks like a dump - well, it IS a dump! Maybe after the center is spruced up, I can work with the children to clear the place up and plant a garden.

*What has surprised you most about working with Pudiyaador?*

I've never worked with children before; for a very good reason - they intimidate me! So, it's been a great learning experience. There's no pressure, no deadline. Just a bunch of people who love children and want to give them a new vision for their future. I love the fact that Pudiyaador lets me come up with ideas and plans, and they encourage me to do what I think is best without acting like a wicked stepmother. :)

*What do you wish other people knew about Pudiyaador?*

This is more than a non-profit organization. This is a lifestyle. It's worth it. And we need guitars! ;)



*Little Sarita getting her very first dental exam*



*Girls' open discussion session with Dr. Prasanna*





## Saradwata (Wateez) Sarkar

*Wateez is a doctoral student in Biomedical Engineering. Originally from Kolkata, he currently resides at Ann Arbor, Michigan. He has been Pudiador's steadfast supporter, volunteer and friend for long. Wateez has graciously agreed to share some thoughts on why he holds Pudiador close to his heart.*

*How did you get involved with Pudiador?*

I first heard of Pudiador in 2006 after I came to Ann Arbor. The people who introduced me to Pudiador are now my closest friends and in the process of getting to know them, their thoughts and their visions, I became involved with Pudiador.

*What would you say are some of your strongest beliefs about educating and empowering children?*

From personal experience, I say that a person's proficiency in mathematics, languages or the arts has an important but limited role in education. True education comes from developing an open mind and a willingness to

**"True education comes from developing an open mind and a willingness to give back to society."**

give back to society. Unless kids grow up with such a mindset and take responsibility for society's future, we will forever be fighting a losing battle to educate them. However, one does not need to be born with such a mindset. It can be attained through proper guidance, which is where I think Pudiador's true test will be.

*Is there a particular story/incident that you would like to share with other Pudiador well-wishers?*

A friend of mine, who works and thinks incessantly for Pudiador, once complained to me earnestly that she does not do enough for Pudiador! This attitude is typical of the people working behind Pudiador and shows that it is in good hands.

*When your friends and family find out that you volunteer at and support a non-profit, what do they say or ask?*

They do feel proud. They talk about whether something like Pudiador could be built in Kolkata.

*What would you tell someone who is thinking about donating or volunteering?*

Volunteering is great! It is something I only do occasionally at present. So, that is something I hope to do more of in the future. Donating definitely supports the continuous implementation of Pudiador's projects for the



children, but it's also important to keep in touch with the progress of the programs you donate to. Your interest is just as important as your money for their success.

*What do you wish other people knew about Pudiador?*

Many people often complain that Pudiador paints a bleak picture of India while ignoring its many beauties. True, India is beautiful in many ways – one can't deny that. The people of India also suffer in many ways; to ignore that is to live in denial. I think Pudiador draws attention to the things that need to be changed.

## Featured activity: Clowns Without Borders

A two-member team from Clowns without Borders, a French non-profit, visited the Pudiador Ramapuram center on November 15<sup>th</sup> to conduct a two hour workshop for the children. In that short period, they transported all of us to a beautiful world of fun, laughter and wonder.

The first activity was to learn to emote different expressions (of surprise, anger, joy, disgust, etc.) using an imaginary air balloon! The children enjoyed passing the “balloon” to one another, and thereby experimented with expressing the various emotions.

The second activity involved “writing” in English on an imaginary board! Imagine what fun it would be if you were asked not to use your fingers and to write only with your fist, toe, knee, elbow or forehead! While some children “wrote” on the imaginary board, others took turns to “read” the letters on the “board”! This had all the children in splits.



The third activity was mirroring. The children were paired up with one as the doer and the other as the mirror. This generated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the kids and resulted in many laughs.

The fourth activity was tight-rope walking. The children had to imagine themselves walking on a rope across a water canal and act out the various emotions that would appear during the course of the walk. Walking forward and backward, the children showed great imagination and expressed fear, anguish, relief, and joy during different stages of the walk!

Finally, the kids staged a “no-dialog role play” with the assistance of Mr. Lenin, their art teacher. The play was centered on acceptable and unacceptable social behavior depicting common social ills (drunken driving, usage of



phones while driving leading to accidents, problems of not following a queue system, etc.)

The visitors enjoyed this performance immensely and in turn, presented the kids with a set of “clown nose and ears” (red plastic balls) to wear and act as clowns! The Ramapuram kids enjoyed the workshop so much that they have decided to share these activities with the Urappakkam and Vannandurai kids.





## Featured event: Children's Day celebrations

*A report by Anupama from Deepam: Educating, Empowering and Lighting Lives*

The morning of November 15th saw quite a bit of rain in Chennai. However, Children's Day comes but once a year, and we decided to go ahead with the celebrations at our Pudiador center no matter what.

Deepam volunteers (Sundar, Arathi, Srini and I) started off the session and Srini gave them a demonstration. The kids watched the blank t-shirt skeptically wondering what to do. They were then encouraged to draw a sample on paper and then put them on t-shirts.

Once the creative juices started flowing, out came a swimmer, a Pokémon character, lots of flowers, beautiful motifs, etc. The younger boys couldn't resist using the roller to cover their shirts with bright green patterns. The most popular designs were embossed patterns in different colors that resulted in creative figures on the t-shirts.



Some of them happily printed their names in Tamil and English. One of the kids I was helping, when asked to write his name, actually signed it like an autograph! That was amusing. The youngest ones also pitched in, generously applying paint all over the floor, and sometimes on the cardboard boxes and t-shirts too.

An hour or more whizzed past. While we were urging the kids to wrap things up, Archana and KK joined us with a surprise - cake! After some biscuits, candies and cake sharing, the session ended with a group photograph and shouts of "Happy Children's Day".

Many thanks to the children and volunteers for a wonderful Sunday morning!



Deepam is a Chennai-based non-profit founded by young professionals. They dream of empowering lesser-privileged children by providing access to information and opportunity. Deepam volunteers work closely with Pudiador and help our children explore computers through fun and informative techniques. In addition, they conduct general awareness and English language workshops.



## A peek into the year 2010

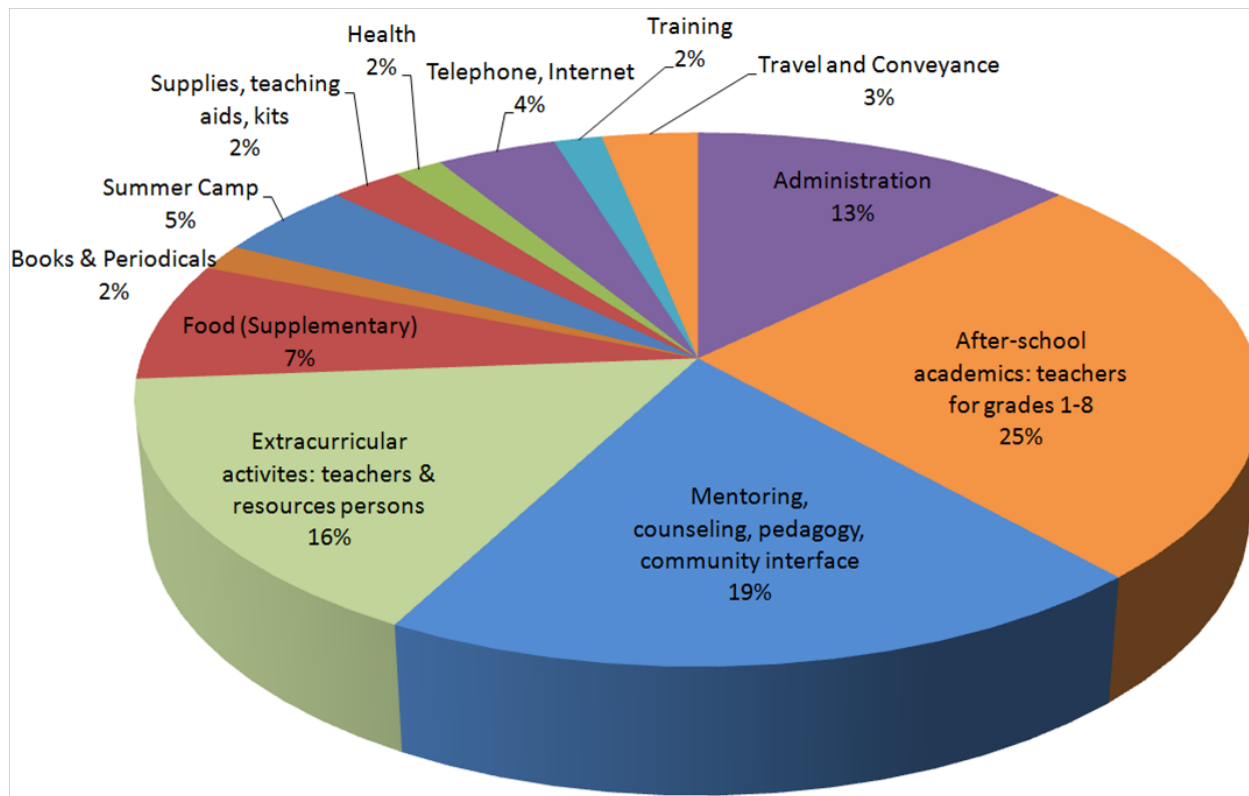
Here's a secret that we can't keep anymore - we *are* growing older and larger! The Pudiyaador team, led by our new COO, has been working very hard on our strategy for 2010, and we are very excited to share it with all of you. The primary idea is to streamline our operations and hopefully increase our positive impact on our children and their communities.

Our programs will shift in emphasis and content, with 75% of effort geared toward children in grades 1 to 5. We will recruit three or four teachers at each center, who will be trained in "hands-on" child-centric Montessori-based methods. These teachers will be responsible for the academic development of children in grades 1 to 8. Children in grades 9 to 12 (few in number)

will be guided by volunteers. More resource persons will be engaged in teaching at least five different extra-curricular activities (from music, dance, theater, arts & crafts, sports, and yoga). The children at each center will also have access to three to five more desktop computers and the Internet.

We plan to dedicate more of our time to the communities. In addition to daily operations, documentation, and community interface, our center facilitators will now be responsible for service programs, such as mentorship to youth, substance abuse awareness, adult literacy, and weekly medical clinics. To help them with these additional responsibilities, we plan to hire support staff who will be recruited from the communities. The goal is to provide the communities an opportunity to have a sense of ownership and to make progress towards self-sufficiency of the Pudiyaador centers.

To implement the scaling up of operations in the three Pudiyaador communities as described in our mission statement<sup>‡</sup>, our projected budget for 2010 will be approximately \$48,000. The annual operational costs are categorized as shown in the graphic. After-school academics, mentoring, counseling, pedagogy, extra-curricular activities, community relations, and empowerment initiatives account for 60% of the budget. An update to the budget and a statement of expenses for the first quarter (January – March 2010) will be provided in the next issue of Pudiyaador Times.



**Budget projection for 2010**

<sup>‡</sup>The Pudiyaador mission statement can be viewed at: <http://pudiyaador.org/pudiyaador/n.shtml>

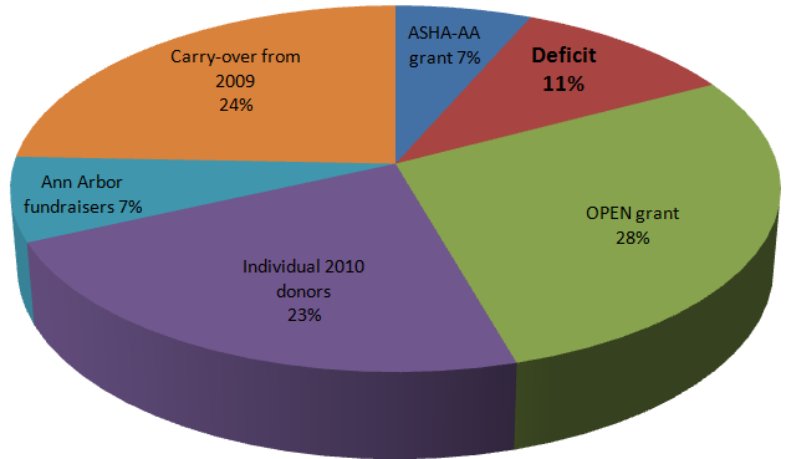




## Funding commitments for 2010

Currently, Pudiyador has received funding commitments for 2010 totaling \$43,000 from various sources as shown below. Currently, the core team is working with AID chapters at Clemson (SC) and Seattle (WA), Asha for Education at Denver (CO), and the Society of Women Engineers in Ann Arbor (MI) to raise funds to cover the deficit of \$5,000. If you or someone you know are interested in helping, please write to [info@pudiyador.org](mailto:info@pudiyador.org)

*We just received a generous grant from OPEN (Organization to Provide Education). They do exceptional work in facilitating education for the underprivileged. Please check them out: [www.openindia.org](http://www.openindia.org)*



## A peek into the year 2010

We hope you enjoyed hearing from us as much as we enjoyed bringing you our updates through this newsletter. As we are about to step through the doorway to 2010, it is both exciting and gratifying to look back on 2009.

In the past year, three of our teenagers have started college – the first in their families and communities to do so. Sreenivasan and Anbarasi from Urappakkam are pursuing degrees in physics. They come back to the Urappakkam center to teach math and vocal music on weekday evenings and weekends. Mythili from Ramapuram is majoring in biochemistry. During weekends, she teaches veena to the children at Ramapuram.

Ramya, a highschooler from Vannandurai, has been identified by Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram as a potential yoga instructor and has been sponsored to undergo advanced teacher training at their institution. She leads yoga activities at the Vannandurai center.

Sreenivasan, Anbarasi, Mythili and Ramya are our proudest accomplishments and shining examples of what Pudiyador children can achieve. We hope to see most, if not all, of our children follow in their footsteps to greater things and a better life.

As we continue to grow, we plan on recruiting candidates for paid staff positions and teaching assignments with the Pudiyador team in 2010. Candidates from the Pudiyador communities will be preferred over outside applicants. In addition to full-time positions, we will also be hiring part-time assistants from the communities or from amongst the older students at Pudiyador centers.

We hope that a symbiotic community involvement at the Pudiyador centers will help us move quickly towards a fully self-sustaining Pudiyador community in the not-too-distant future.

It is your involvement and generosity that sustains our mission and growth.



We value your friendship and hope that you will continue to support us in the years to come!

