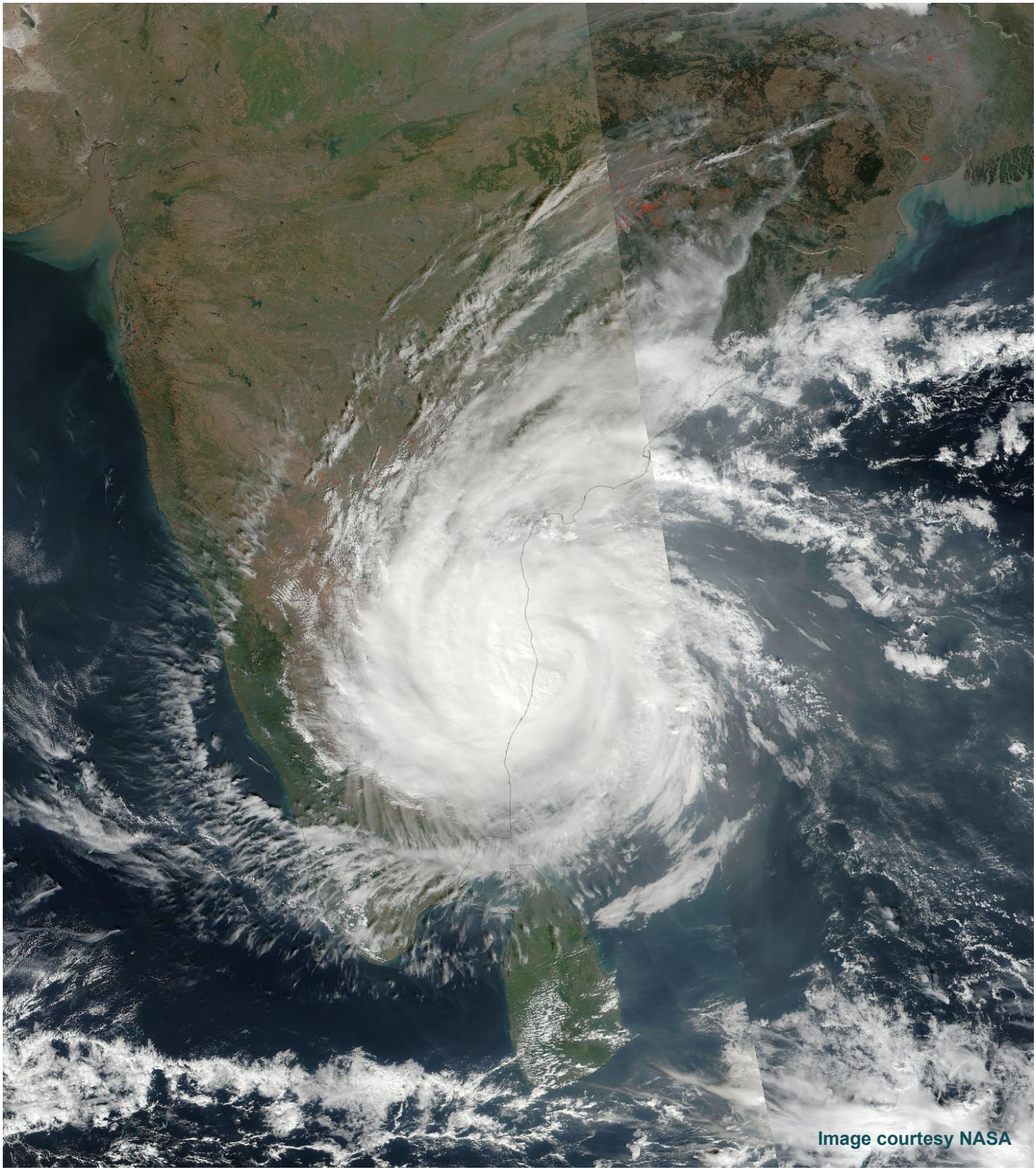

Image courtesy NASA

Pudiyador Times

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Cyclone Vardah

Sometimes, calamities can go way beyond our predictions. One such event is the occurrence of Cyclone Vardah, which lasted from the 6th to the 18th of December 2016. When cyclone Vardah became furious after landfall, Chennai experienced historic winds - a Category 1 storm at 100 km/hr - and 300 mm rainfall. The cyclone wreaked absolute carnage, claiming over 38 lives in its entirety.

Uprooted trees, hanging power wires, damaged compound walls, 224 blocked roads, power cuts, lack of everyday supplies, fallen hoardings, failed communication & internet - Chennai was ripped up.

Pudiyador families were some of the many that were affected. Pictured here are the damages to some of our children's homes.

Losing one of our centers

Of the structures affected was one of the Pudiyador centers in Ramapuram. It was run in a government 'Balwadi' building for pre-schoolers in the community. A tree fell on the roof of the center bringing part of the structure down and making it unsafe to enter the building. We couldn't run our sessions for almost 3 months as we waited for the reconstruction of the 'Balwadi' (government promised completion in a month).

As of Mar 2018, the Balwadi rubble has been cleared but the new building is yet to be constructed

Since, there were no signs of it happening, we called for a parents meeting to share ideas on how we can run our sessions.

Some offered to host groups of children in their home, some volunteered their land where we could build temporary sheds. A real show of spirit from the community!

A temporary solution was arrived at: we would group the children with the other center at Ramapuram, 1.5kms away. The children were thrilled! This meant that they would walk everyday with friends & experience a new space. But soon this enthusiasm died as the little feet found it difficult to walk making them stay back home & not do anything productive in the evening. This raised a red flag for the parents who requested if we could provide a transport for them to come to the other space. This idea too collapsed soon as the children found it tiring. This left us with no option but to rent a space.

Unfortunately, it isn't easy in our city to find spaces that can host 30 - 50 children. Seeing us struggle, the teenagers offered to walk to the other space, allowing us to rent a small space for the younger ones.

Rental space for younger children (lower floor of pink building)

Though initially after the cyclone, attendance was only at 8 - 10 children, upon regular home visits we had the same 40 children come to our center regularly. Today, though we have numerous challenges in the space, the children don't complain. They are worried that a temporary shutdown would mean no Pudiyador which is something they don't want to get used to.

Engineering new solutions

Unfortunately, for many in the world, water is not as accessible as some of us might think. For billions across the globe, washing your hands or pouring a glass isn't as easy as a flick of a tap. For many of Pudiyador's children, it involves treks to the nearby well and difficulties in accessing the water, drip by drip, from its unforgiving depths. Pudiyador, over the past couple of months, had been looking for ways to solve a few of our water-related problems; we wanted to conserve water, lower our costs, and increase usability of our water sources. In addition, we wished to introduce more hygenic practices within our programs.

We had been noticing that many of our children had been "double-dipping" in the water, washing their hands in drinking water, and pursuing activities of the like. The well itself presented another hazard. Due to its depth, the children were not able to access the water easily without thrusting themselves near the edge. This would often be done without adult supervision, and posed serious concerns to us.

However, the children of our YAP program seemed to rise up to the task and save the day, all by building and designing an elementary plumbing system!

In total, about 10 children actively worked to build the plumbing network, and great progress was achieved.

Pudiyador initially attempted to source the system from outside, but preliminary quotes yielded a cost of 4500 Rs! It was then that a brilliant idea came about – instead of outsourcing the work, why couldn't we use this problem to invent a solution, and perhaps teach our children a little something about creativity and engineering? And so it began!

The first plan of action was to take accurate measurements. Measurements were needed to determine the necessary heights, widths, and depths of the system in order to serve our interests. From there, our children aided in assessing the quantity of needed items: they were guided through the selection of different pipes, taught about the intricacies of various taps, and instructed on assorted pulling mechanisms. The group, after gathering materials and tools, began work. Pipes were laid down from the well to the toilets, and another pipe was set in order to wash vessels and other items. A pulley and bucket were used to draw water from the well as needed, and a plastic tank was implemented to collect water for the toilet system and the water tap.

The children would use the system to fill buckets of water, and that water would be directed to the plastic tank. As a result, through the use of taps, the children could access the water in a hygienic and safe way. After our children's hard work and determination, we tested the plumbing for the first time, and to our delight, it worked wonderfully! The children could clearly see how real engineering and maths can help in day-to-day problems. The classroom, essential, had its place in the real world. They were elated when they found their smarts and perseverance had made their community a safer place. Hygienic practices were put in place, and soon, Pudiyador had a bustling water source free for all!

We had been using the well for about six months, but unfortunately, Cyclone Vardah had come and gone. Many of our families were affected, and Pudiyador extends our sympathies to them. In the middle of a storm, a tree happened to fall on our pipes, damaging the water system and effectively rendering it unusable. But, all is not lost.

Pudiyador hopes to remedy as much of the damages as it can, and hopefully resume a similar project soon.

Overall, we feel as if our children have learned valuable lessons in design and engineering, all while having fun and contributing to their own communities! We are proud to say that our organization is now a proud owner of a tried and tested invention made for children, by children, all working together towards a common goal.

Making sense of our dollars in 2016

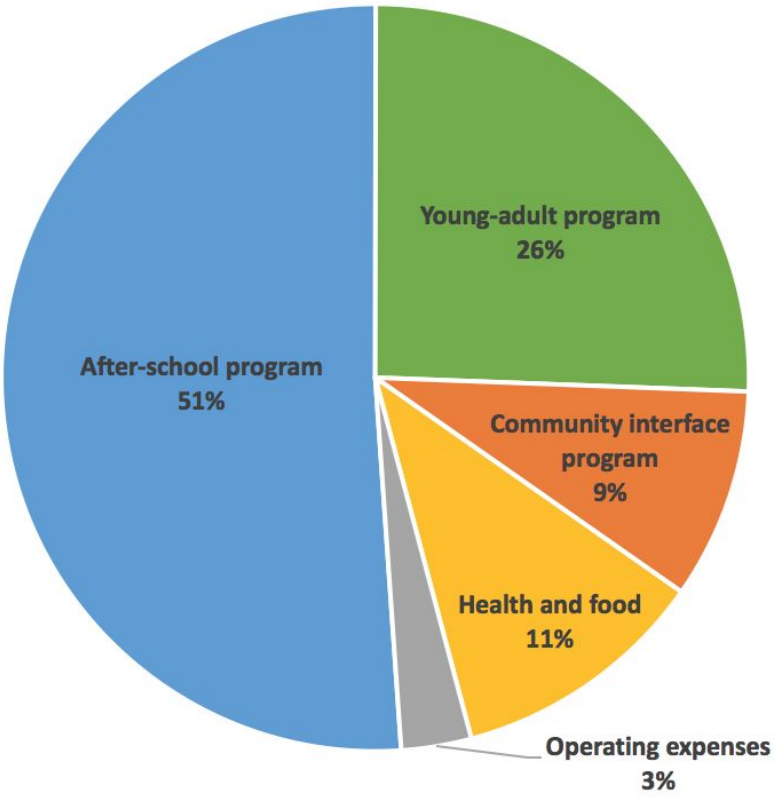
2016 budget

Since this is a retrospectively published newsletter, we are able to give you the actual figures of what we spent and where the money came from!

We spent a total of $87,534 on the 10 programs that we run:

- 4 after-school programs (ASP)
- 2 young-adult programs (YAP)
- 4 community interface programs (CIP)

There are 25-30 children in each ASP and YAP, 130 families in CIP.



Funding sources

In this year, we had a pretty significant deficit that was outstanding into the early months of the following year.

A funding drive, primarily among friends and family of Pudiyador, helped us cover the costs of our programming retroactively.

We are indeed lucky to have people such as you that we can rely on when in need.