

Pudiyador Times

Issue 9, Jan 2012



A photograph of three children sitting on a concrete ledge against a light blue wall. They are all looking down at books they are holding. The child on the left is a boy in a pink shirt and dark pants. The child in the middle is a boy in a white shirt and brown pants. The child on the right is a girl in a purple dress. The text 'Happy New Year!' is written in red in the top right corner of the image.

Happy
New
Year!

Best wishes for the New Year. Did you know that Pudiador is now 10 years old? There's more on that later... As for 2012, Pudiador's goals are quite simply to:

1. Refine and complete the development of Pudiador's activity based syllabus.
2. Implement newly developed syllabus by AY 2012; includes upgrading facilities to support syllabus and training the teaching staff to deliver curriculum content.
3. Plan and establish a new Pudiador center in Chennai by summer.
4. Develop and implement a consistent health & hygiene program for all our communities.

In addition to working toward these goals, the Pudiador team will be brainstorming to generate ideas for this year's theme, "science". The choice of theme was inspired by the success of the Parikshan* mobile science vans called Vigyanraths ("chariots of science" in *Sanskrit*) during the Science Week last December; our kids had a rollicking time taking apart a computer, recreating volcanoes and making spectacularly colorful chemical solutions! We hope to excite our kids and kindle the spirit of science through more such activities this year. If you have ideas or suggestions related to our theme, do write to us at: newsletter@pudiador.org

*<http://parikshancharitabletrust.org>

Our founder reminisces

One day, 10 years ago in a college classroom. A professor teaching advanced Tamil literature, was speaking on the topic of a *marathamizhan* (a true Tamilian). He wondered whether the topic was appreciated. He asked his 13 students to write the topic on the blackboard, and each spelt it differently, shocking the professor. Poor *marathamizhan*, he was marred 13 different ways that day. The lecturer, deeply saddened by this misfortune that had befallen the Tamil language, privately interviewed each student only to be shocked even more. He realized that children, regardless of whether they are from urban or rural areas, were being provided a very poor fundamental education – a sad situation that is especially true for the poorer students. Apathy, neglect, selfishness, impatience among others contribute to this sorry state of affairs. After some soul searching, the professor realized that the issue to be addressed is not education at the university level but education at the elementary level among poor children.

While making efforts to address this issue, the professor had another epiphany – this elementary education isn't enough; the education they get from their school curriculum isn't good enough; this education that is supposed to ennoble children and teach them life skills is the very thing that is destroying their individuality and stunting their development.



Out of such lessons learned was formed an organization. It aimed to nurture in children confidence, leadership, creativity, curiosity and courage. Workshops were organized, the kids introduced to a wide range of subjects. The result – at the end of the summer camp, they had matured enough to suggest a name for the organization all by themselves.

Pudiyador was born.

An early morning. A spoken English class at the Pudiyador center. Two thugs try to steal a locked bicycle parked outside the center. A Pudiyador boy gives chase crying out “Thief, Thief”, not afraid of the stones they threw at him to scare him away. The alarmed thieves drop the cycle and run away.

Yoga camp. Certificates of commendation for excellence in Yoga are being given out that day. The camp director asks a Pudiyador girl getting a certificate from him, “Now that you are an expert in Yoga, will you teach me?”. The girl gladly agrees. “*Thadasana*. Keep your legs this way. Raise your heels and hold your hands together like this” – she corrects his posture confidently.

Children are painting. A 6 year old boy proudly shows off his handiwork. “What is it?” the professor asks, his adult imagination not dexterous enough to extrapolate between the lines of his stick drawing. “It’s a cow”, comes the reply. He can now discern the rough outline of a horn and a tail in the drawing. “Can you draw a goat?”. Sure enough, 5 minutes later, he could see the shorter horn and tail in the new sketch. “Can you draw a lion?”. “Sure”. In a few minutes, a lion stands on a river bank. “What is this?” “The lion in drinking from the river.” “But the lion’s head isn’t in the water.” “No, you see, its eating a fish it caught while drinking water...” The professor, astonished by his imagination, shakes his head, and smiles.

Winter Activity Camp. A workshop about science in everyday life. The children sit transfixed by the charts, pictures and gadgets. The next day, a doctor shows up

Our founder reminisces

for the “Health Awareness” camp. “Why is the head the most important part of our body?”, he asks. A 5-year old girl answers in Tamil, “Because, it houses the cerebrum, cerebellum and medulla oblangata.” The doctor who was unfamiliar with the Tamil word for medulla oblangata had to have it pointed out to him in his anatomy chart.

A school classroom. The teacher trying to teach the nuances in pronouncing similar sounding Tamil alphabets ends up pronouncing all of them the same way. A Pudiyaador boy points out the teacher’s mistake to his friend. The teacher wants to know what they are talking about during class hours. The friend obediently confesses, “he claims you are pronouncing them wrong”. Instead of punishing any perceived insolence, the teacher, to her credit, asks him to come up to the front and demonstrate the correct way to do it. The boy confidently does so. The impressed teacher shows her approval by asking the rest of the class to learn the correct pronunciations from him.

A classical music festival. Pudiyaador children sitting in the front row keeping beat with the intricately complicated music. The astonished festival organizer

asks them to come up to the stage at the end of the concert and asks the crowd to join him in another round of applause for “these kids who enjoyed the *Veena* so much.” The audience applause is tinged with amazement and incredulity.

2002-2011. So many memories in these 10 years. Now, what will the next 10 years of Pudiyaador bring?

A girl who had stopped coming to Pudiyaador. A year later, she comes to Pudiyaador, not a girl anymore, but a 14 year old woman, with a baby on her hips. The professor asks “Is that your child?” She nods yes. A child with a child! He was despondent. “Despite your many protests, they married me off”, she says. “I hate the fact that I can no longer come to Pudiyaador. I had so many dreams... I wanted to learn so much... teach other kids... I dreamt of starting my own Pudiyaador project... all of it is now ruined.” The professor was about to say something when she continued, “But, I won’t fail my kid the same way. I will give him a childhood better than mine, a new Pudiyaador childhood.” The steely determination and quiet confidence in her voice moves the retired professor profoundly. In his mind, he has passed the torch to her. His eyes glisten, heralding tears of joy... ■



Down memory lane

The vision of Pudiyaador was developed, along with plans for funding and scope of the project. The founders of Pudiyaador visited and studied the nearby slum cluster and its schools, and purchased property in Ramapuram to establish the first Pudiyaador after-school center.



2001

Down memory lane



All the activities that Pudiyaor children engage in in the present day, were first taught to them in this year's summer camp. In total, the children were exposed to over 20 activities...

... including theater, dance, arts & craft, music, sports and yoga! Our kids were featured in a popular children's magazine twice that year. One of the articles was titled "highly privileged children".



2002

Down memory lane



A library was added with donated books; children started their mornings with singing lessons before school; the month-long summer camp involved the kids learning what their parents did at work...

... the highlights of the camp were milking a cow and cooking rice-crepes! This year, the parents participated in the project by attending the performances of their kids, despite their grueling schedules at multiple jobs.

2003

Down memory lane



Karate was added to the activities... our karate kids participated in a local martial art event; monthly musical shows by city artists were organized to bring the concert experience to our center. Kids participated in a classical Tamil theater production.

An adult literacy program was initiated for the kids' mothers; also, medical insurance coverage was provided to parents and children in the community.

2004

Down memory lane



This was a special year. Inspired by their experiences at Pudiador, a group of volunteers decided to start a new Pudiador in a slum near their college in Urappakkam. After convincing the community leaders, planning funding sources, and working our operational details, Pudiador Urappakkam (PU) was born.

Meanwhile in Ramapuram (PR), we started spoken English classes for the children and an adult literacy program for the fathers. Our kids responded to the Tsunami disaster by raising money and awareness.

2005

Down memory lane



The children from PR came to PU frequently to share their knowledge and skills. Yoga and instrumental music classes formally began at PU. We started Yoga classes for mothers too.



A new building was constructed at PU to enable classes to carry on even during inclement weather. The building was the only *pukka* building in the community. The kids took full responsibility of the maintenance of their new space.

2006

Down memory lane



Another special year, another new center, this time in a slum in Vannandurai (PV). Pudiador now formed an organized “Core” team to manage the activities at the three centers. Field trips were made a regular part of the curriculum across all three centers, enabling the children to mingle frequently.



Children of PU made big waves in the theater circles of Chennai with their performance “*Sidhharta*”. New activities were added to PU and PV. Mothers from the communities were recruited as cooks to ensure nutritious snacks for our children. Monthly parent meetings became standard across all centers.

2007

Down memory lane



We added *sitar* and *tabla* instrumental music to the children's repertoire. Kids from PR showcased their theater skills at a city park for CRY. Parents partnered with Pudiyaador staff to organize festival celebrations in their communities.

The sports curriculum was expanded to include badminton. In addition to monthly meetings, Pudiyaador staff also visited children's homes to build better community relations and understand the needs of the kids.

2008

Down memory lane

Structural changes to the organization brought the centers closer and the operations more efficient. Recruitment of additional teachers and facilitators positively impacted the children's experiences.



Computer literacy took on a serious turn this year, with Deepam and Bhumi pitching in. Other activities were on in full swing at all three centers, with a particular expansion in the music program, thanks to several generous donations.



2009

Down memory lane



PR set the trend of painting murals on all the walls! This trend was followed through the next year in the rest of the centers.



We began dabbling in Skype sessions between Chennai and the US. This year will be remembered for the many fun-filled and informational field trips in which kids from all 3 centers really got to know each other.

Pudiyador Urappakkam had to be shut down due to local politics.



2010

Down memory lane



Two new Pudiador centers! Need we say more? Ok, then, we will :) We expanded our computer program to include at least 5 computers per center. We began regular Skype sessions. Our operations became stronger than ever before. And here's something we didn't get a chance to show you before. The kids of PR helped build their own house! Their own parents some of whom are construction workers and a few friends that are builders and carpenters taught them how to. This is one of our largest educational projects ever attempted in Pudiador!

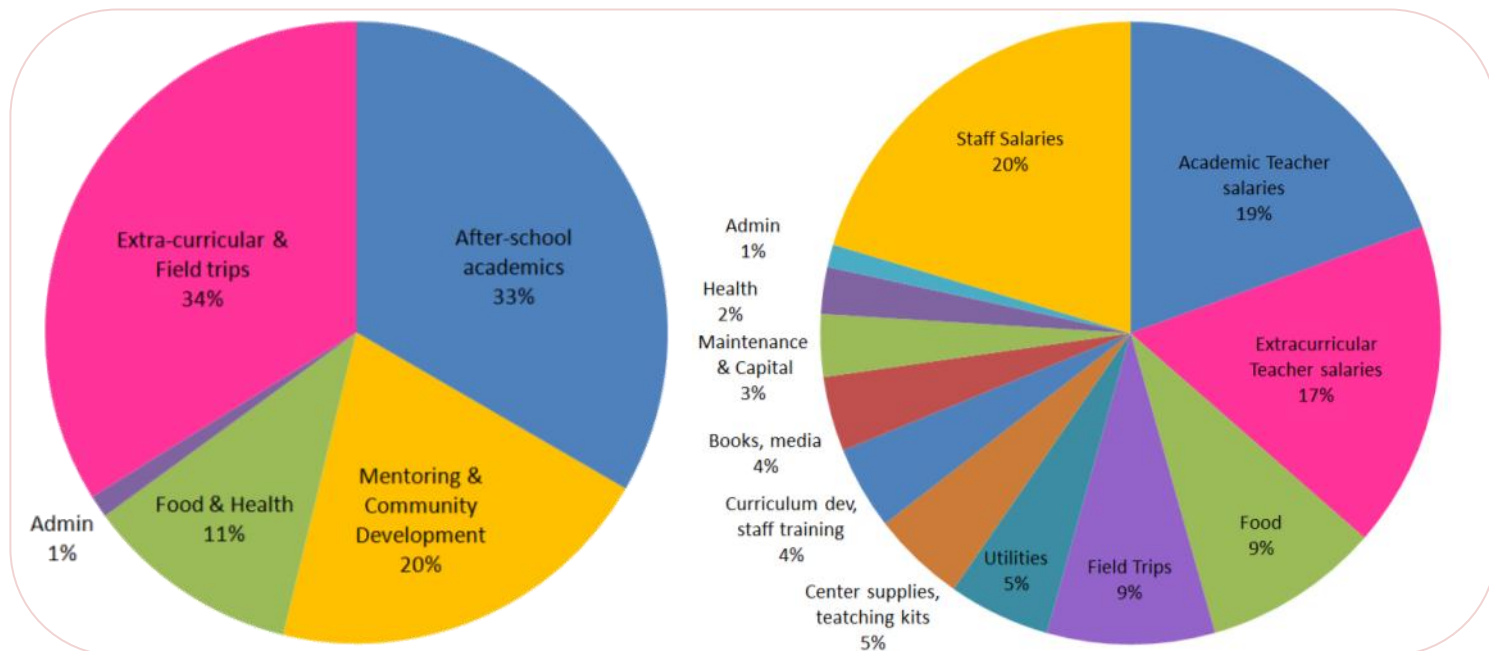


2011

Financial Overview for 2012

2012 promises to be a year of progress. As we continue on the path towards strengthening our curricular components, Pudiyaador's pedagogy team will improve, evaluate and finalize the new syllabus before the next academic year. The team is also designing a summer training program for the teaching staff. Finally, with internet connectivity at all centers, we are adding more activities and projects that will involve kids working extensively with computers.

Since the addition of the 2 new centers, there has been a 13% increase in the 2012 budget projection from that of 2011. The increase is also due in part to the strengthening of our team, particularly in the area of curriculum development. Since several resources are shared, we have *reduced* our total expenses *per center* by 15%. By opening a new center this summer, we hope to impact even more children and stretch your dollars even further.



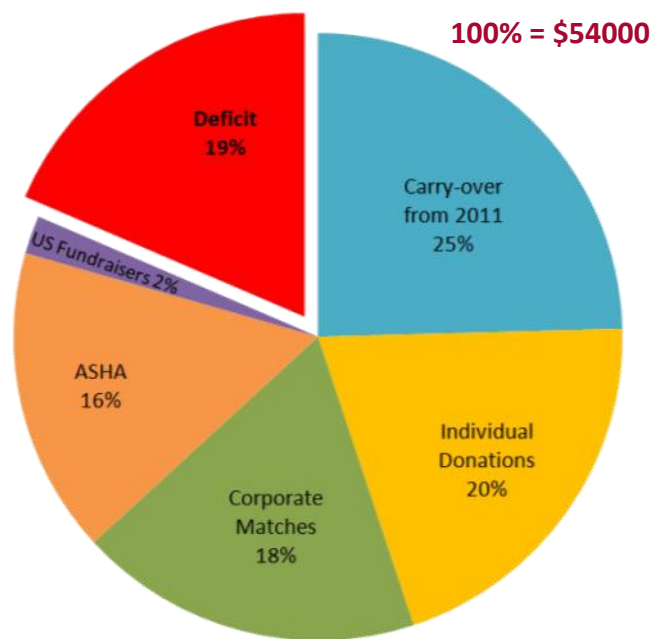
Use of funds: Program-wise

Use of funds: Cost-wise

In addition to meeting our funding needs in 2011, we received generous contributions that we could carry over towards the 2012 budget.

Pudiyaador's financial outlook is hopeful, with continued support from ASHA for Education and a significant portion of funding contributed by folks like you. Also, most of our donors have managed to match their contributions from their employers, which is great!

Currently, we are facing a deficit of a little over \$10,000 and we are waiting for responses from other donors.



Funding Sources

Have you been wondering what *you* can do to help?



ONLINE CLASSES!

- Help with academics
- Impart any of your skills
- Demonstrate science experiments
- Hold discussions about relevant and important topics
- Simply chat with the children about their lives and yours

Sign up for a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly slot at:

www.pudiyador.org/signup



We welcome donations

(PayPal, Cash, or Cheque)

- One-time or monthly
- We're a 501(c)(3) organization
- We also have FCRA clearance
- **All donations are tax-exempt**



Spread the word

- Partner us with other NGOs
- Ask your employer about CSR
- How about matching donations?

How can you help?

Here are our current & specific needs

1. Projector and speakers
 - Skype classes are clearer on the big screen
 - We also screen educational/fun movies
2. Reading material
 - Books in English for ages 3-10
 - Illustrated books for non-readers
3. Educational material
 - Picture cards for innovative story telling
 - Dictionaries (English and/or Tamil)
 - Children's puzzles and activity books
4. Music and sports equipment
 - We urgently need *veenas* and guitars
 - Any other musical instrument
 - Bats/balls/frisbee for group sports
5. Cameras and Camcorders
 - Digital cameras to record activities and share between centers
 - Camcorders for curriculum development and documentation

Contact our Program Manager
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We would love your feedback!

Our newsletter team would love to hear from you—after all, you are the reason our team exists! Please let us know what we can do to make this newsletter more informative and enjoyable. Or just drop a line to say hello :)

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