

Auroville, November 2013

Dear friends and donors,

Our team has decided to serve no polished rice anymore at Deepam. We believe we are the only school where **complete rice and local millets** are offered. For many of our children this change has not been easy as they eat only white rice at home. Usually big amounts of rice are eaten with chopped vegetables which are cooked for a long time and combined with spicy and oily sauces. Traditionally hardly any raw food or salad is eaten. With the advertisements and availability of fast food, Coke and ice-cream, the civilization diseases are sharply on the rise. Although many people are still starving, India is the country with most diabetics in the world.

Our **daycare-group**, at present having 33 children and youth with various disabilities, is **well organised** with a daily and a weekly schedule of activities. The day at Deepam starts with tooth-brushing and the morning circle which is prepared by different team members, including the volunteers. After this the children receive education and therapy sessions, either individually or in small groups according to their abilities. Parallel to this some of our team members give **physio,- occupational,- and speech-therapy** to children who come with their parents as **outpatients**. At present we offer treatment to several children with multiple disabilities who have behavioural disorders and autism. Their parents need much training to be able to handle their challenging children.

Vinoth is now almost four years old and was born with a profound hearing loss. For one year he has been coming with his mother as an outpatient to Selvi for intensive speech-therapy. In the meantime he has been gradually integrated into our daycare programme and participates well with the older ones, though he is still shy.

Twice a week a group of our children go to the big swimming pool in Auroville. These **sessions in the water** can be very beneficial especially for children with weak or stiff limbs. Many of these children were extremely scared of the pool at first. Several of them have learned over the years how to swim. As some of our team members have developed the skills for giving therapy in the water, these classes have become a favourite at Deepam.

For the older ones at Deepam a “**girls and boys class**“ was started and was received with enthusiasm. Selvi gathers the girls while Palani gathers the boys together. With the help of charts and books, the body and its functions are explained. There is space to share experiences and to talk about “women and men topics.” We see education, the building up of trust and the acquisition of good values as beneficial tools to equip these children for their future lives.



In the past years, Deepam had more youths and adults who are unable to become independent of our help. Therefore it became important to **expand vocational training**. We teach them how to make candles, work with wood and handle a sewing-machine. Youths capable of working outside Deepam are assisted to find a suitable place for training. As a result we are left with the older ones who are very weak in their concentration span, their comprehension or their fine-motor skills. For some of them, even the simplest of tasks require assistance and constant supervision. For our team it is at times difficult to occupy these adults in a meaningful way.

Following are some figures from the latest nationwide census. Although India is a country with a growing economy, **65% of all Indians live below the poverty line**. The level of hunger is still alarming with 40% of children under five considered underweight. There are many contrasting facts. Half of the population has no toilet at home while more than half of all Indians own a cell phone. Only 67% of India has access to electricity. Millions of women rely on traditional smoky fuels for cooking. Less than a third of the population has access to treated drinking water.

The outlook is bleak as at present India faces economic difficulties. The Indian Rupee is extremely weak against the US Dollar. On top of that, the export of goods to Europe has dropped tremendously while India has to import most of its crude oil for high prices. A drastically high inflation rate, especially for petrol and for basic food items, affects once again the poorest people the most. **Almost all our children at Deepam come from disadvantaged families.**

In August and September, Angelika was in Germany and was once again touched by the Deepam **network** and the wonderful people who support our work with various activities and their donations. **Thank you all!** On different occasions Angelika was invited to show our **new film** which was well received. We hope this informative documentation will bring you closer to our work with the children. Please watch it on YouTube with the following link:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zatn6GtLEWs>

The children and the team members at Deepam would like **to thank all our well-wishers** for their continuous support and send you **best wishes for Christmas and the New Year!**
Angelika Ehrle & Lawrence Selvi

See our website for more information and pictures:
<http://www.deepam-auroville.in>

Online donations to Deepam can be done through the following portal:
<http://www.auroville.com/donations/>

