

Sivapatha Kalaiyagam Tamil Mixed School, Kilinochchi

By Dr Velautham Sarveswaran

It was in 1982, my batch mates and I were in our 2nd year of engineering degree course at University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka. There was flooding in Kilinochchi sometime in 1982 and we collected dry rations and went to Kilinochchi to hand over them to flood victims. After handing over the rations, we started talking to the villagers, who were predominantly upcountry poor Tamils, who were displaced from upcountry and moved to the north following the 1977 communal riots and have been working as labourers. The villagers told us that they desperately wanted to educate their children than looking for food. They were struggling to get school admissions to their children because they lost all their certificates during the riots. They asked whether we could provide them with a building so that they can start teaching their children. These families needed support then and now to improve their lives.

We took this as a challenge and raised funds through staging a drama at Jaffna Veerasingham Hall, while we were continuing with our degree course. Eventually, our batch managed to construct a building for a school, which was then handed over to the local priest Fr Pias. A photo of the opening ceremony in 1982 is attached. The school was named "Sivapatha Kalaiyam". "Sivapatha" has a particular meaning related to the displaced people but I do not want to expand on it. Although, we lost touch with the school following 1983 riots and the civil war afterwards and the displacement of many of our friends, Fr Pias continued with his services to this school and managed to convert it into a government school. The school has grown very well over the years and is providing education to pupils up to GCE (O/L).



Opening ceremony of Sivapatha Kalaiyagam in 1982 (Mr Ananthasangari speaking)

The Indian Government later renovated the building. The photos below show the current condition of the building that was built by E80 engineering undergraduates. It was noticeable that the roof was very low. I told the principal that what we did was a basic need with hard earned money and had to be very careful with the funds we collected.



The principal made a request to raise the roof, extend the building by another 40', and build a veranda and a stage so that they can use it as their assembly. They also pointed out that they would use the building for other extra curricular activities. In our opinion, this need is an essential element to improve the learning of the children. It is estimated that this would cost around £10,000.

Recently, there was a news item about this school telecasted by Sakthi TV. The link is given below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vvsdc5SNOC8>

After watching this news, our E80 batch Engineers got together and raised funds to provide toilets, water supply, and fencing of the school premises. Most of our batch mates around the globe and many, who are in Australia, together with Rotary Club of The Ponds and Anbaalayam (Australia) have raised funds to complete these tasks.

Assist RR visited this school several times in 2016 & 2017, and identified more needs. As the school did not even have a single computer, Assist RR donated a laptop, a desk-top computer and a multi media (projector and screen) to assist the pupils with e-learning. Assist RR also donated bicycles and scholarships to children who passed their exams with colours. A girl, who passed Gr 5 scholarship examination with very good marks, do not want to leave the school and is determined to become a doctor by staying there.

An anonymous donor from Manchester came forward and provided around £2150 towards donating 100 sets of Type A desks and chairs. The principal told me that across their zone, no one else has similar high quality furniture. Please note that, as usual, we purchased high quality furniture at a very good rate. To some extent, this donation has made the situation better. However, they still require 50 chairs and 25 desks for their primary children.

The school is still lacking classrooms for conducting lessons. They are currently conducting lessons in a temporary shelter and under a tree. Some photos are given below. The principal has been asking whether Assist RR could provide a 100' building that solve their classroom

shortage. If we could raise £24,000.00, we could construct a 100' building that would provide a safe and acceptable environment to the school children for learning. Assist RR recently completed a similar building to Puthukudiyiruppu Roman Catholic Tamil Mexed School.



Could we please assist this school and support the education of poor children in the surrounding villages?