



Kalanjiyam's Journey

Before you go on to read about the various activities we have taken up in this last year, I would like to say just a bit about Kalanjiyam's journey to this place today. Ours started when we became a part of Kalpat village in Maduranthakam taluk. A spark once ignited is fueled by energy, like this ours was fueled by some of the people who came to us, one after another wanting to make some difference in their communities. In order to build a sustainable community development model, we formed a village committee. The village committee and the young women from the local villages form the core of Kalanjiyam, planning and bringing Kalanjiyam programs to our villages. As a guiding principle we conducted a needs assessment in 20 of our villages (12,466 population) and have focused intensively in 7 villages in our belt from Kalpat to Periya Vellikkadu village.

Our intent was on providing a healthy and nurturing environment for the little children and the young people in our villages. Our at most priority is to ensure that every child in our villages goes to school, gets quality education and has good health. Of equal importance for us is ensuring that adolescent girls and youth in our villages have the life skills and livelihood skills to realize their potential and reach some heights in their lives. This is not to say that we don't work with other segments in our villages, rather our way is to facilitate for the current and past generations to take a more active involvement in nurturing the little ones and young people. So every one in our villages is part of Kalanjiyam be it young, wise, inexperienced or vulnerable.

We are very happy to share with you about what we have done this year. It is said that small beginnings lead to great leaps, so do read on about our beginnings..... All this would not have been possible if not for the support of the various individuals and sponsors who have supported us in our journey this year! We would like to give our most sincere thanks to their encouragement and support and hope they will continue to travel with us and more of you will join us in the years ahead.

Munusamy Raviraj,
Director



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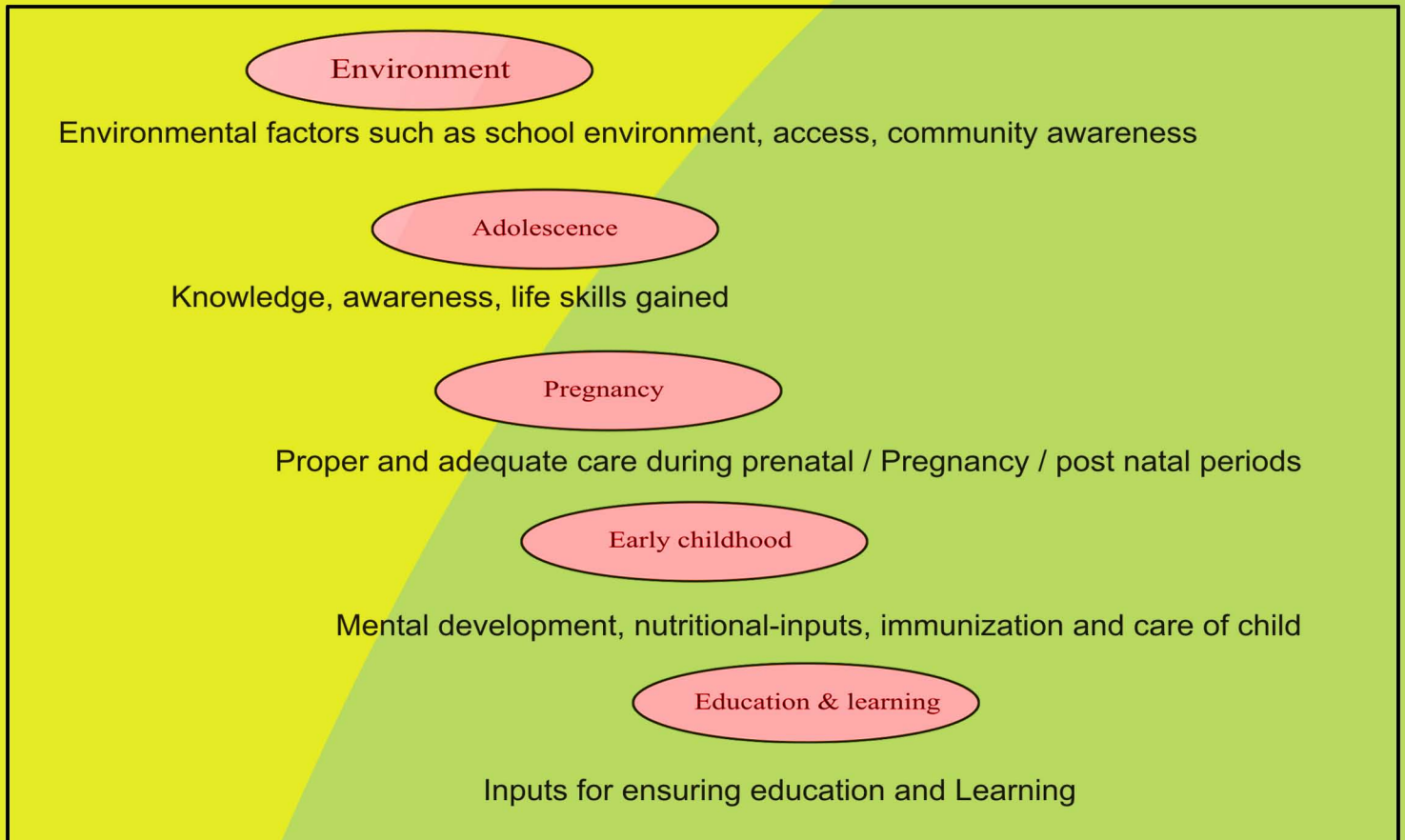
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A Conceptual model for disability prevention

Kalanjiyam's approach to working is guided by the basic tenet that each individual in order to achieve their potential and have meaningful participation in their community needs education, health, skills, a livelihood and a healthy environment. We believe that deficits in any of these areas lead to disabilities for life. Disability arises due to a combination of factors resulting from interplay between biological, environmental and lifestyle factors. Many missed opportunities exist to prevent / address disabilities early on, before they can lead to a functional impairment.



Each of these above factors / areas can contribute to the creation of various disabilities at different stages in life. Our belief is that while interventions and services are required for addressing functional disabilities, there needs to be as well a focus on preventable disabilities for long term health of individuals, families and communities. This has been an important guiding principle in planning and implementing the various programs this year.

Vanavil

In today's world of vital importance is that young people gain confidence and ability to be able to decide from right and wrong. Kalanjiyam's Vanavil project is a unique effort for it tries to address adolescent girls to help them to focus on building their internal strengths and assets.

So how have we gone about this? We have mobilized and organized nearly 70 young women from six of our villages and formed three groups. Each group meets at least once in a month. These meetings are about giving these young women some time to think about themselves and their lives. The meetings are about exploring and discussing their likes, qualities they like and aspire for, their emotions, what they dislike in themselves etc.

In addition the meetings provide a forum for the young women to make new connections and friendships and exchange ideas among themselves. We have also taken this as a forum for imparting new skills that could help them to make a livelihood. Two young women from these groups, having a disability and economic need, have been provided a powered tailoring machine to help improve their family's livelihood. It is also the intent that they in turn will teach tailoring to other young women in the groups.



After a few months now, we are finding the girls opening up and expressing themselves and their views. Some of the young women from the groups have started to take a keen interest in Kalanjiyam activities in particularly in the primary school program. This year we plan to bring more activities for these young women, including assessments to keep track of the progress they are making.

Working with Youth

Very often male youth are left out of many programs and become disillusioned for the lack of attention to their needs as a group. We believe that working to strengthen and build upon the skills of male youth is an important need of the hour, and will benefit the individual youth, their families and the community as a whole. Our village committee strongly recognized working with male youth early on and therefore there is a conscious effort to involve young men from our villages in all our programs.

One of the first activities that we did was to support the local male youth forum to conduct a sports event bringing together youth from all over Maduranthakam taluk. Local youth have taken up the task for providing the weekly supply of fruits that we provide as part of the education program in all our village schools. Similarly a local youth run business has taken up the task of making all the tables and benches for our three village schools.

It also came to our attention from the needs assessment that youth from families stricken from poverty could be given some skills to make them employable. Our village committee therefore screened nearly 50 youth from about 12 of the villages in our area. The criteria for eligibility was young men with at least 8 years of schooling and whose families were landless and living below the poverty line. All the young men were asked about their interest and those with an inclination to become drivers were selected to be professionally trained in driving and for getting their drivers license from a driving school in Maduranthakam. On December 21st licenses were given to 18 youth who passed the driving examination. Even before completion some of them had identified some work, either driving an auto rickshaw, tractor or taxi. We are now in the process of helping these young men find some suitable work in and around Maduranthakam.



In the upcoming we are planning for a number of activities with young men including skill building workshops, awareness of legal rights, finance and some other opportunities for participating in Kalanjyam efforts locally.

The preschool program

As it has been said many a time, the future health of our communities rests on our children. We need to give a great deal of attention to children during the early childhood days by doing everything possible to provide a conducive and healthy environment for a child to grow up and realize its potential. Bearing this in mind, Kalanjyam has started a special program for pre school children in 3 of our villages: Kalpat, Chinna Venmani and Pudur. The main objective is to provide educational and nutritional inputs to the children and preparing them for primary school.

The program is organized in each village where the children are brought together in the village everyday in the late afternoon as a tea time activity. Our staff interact with the little kids for about an hour; during this time the children enjoy the biscuits provided by us, specially selected for the essential nutrients that they contain, which are often lacking from the children's regular diet. Similarly we are also trying to imbibe in the children the habit of eating fruits and so weekly once we provide a banana to all the children. We have provided all the children with water bottles so that they can carry with them water from their homes.

Foremost aim of this program is to create a learning environment for the children, help to instill discipline, bring about an activeness and awareness about their environment and how to interact with others and provide interactions and activities for improving their mental aptitude. Using the interactive teaching aides, the children are taught basics of language, words and forming sentences through songs and stories, number and shapes, about animals, vegetables and fruits. The children are also taught English alphabets and nursery rhymes during this hour. More and more we find that many parents are participating in the program, at which time our staff reinforces to them the importance of proper and adequate nutrition for the children. Similar to the other programs, the children's progress is tracked and followed on a monthly child report card where their height and weight and other indicators are documented. Monthly once the staff discuss the needs of the children, the progress they are making and the kind of inputs required.

Education for All: creating model schools

When we entered Periya Vellikadu Middle school some 9 months back, we barely expected the kind of improvements we have made so far. While the headmaster and local panchayat leader welcomed us, neither did they nor we know what would be ahead and the impact that we would have.

We started out with some very small activities in the school, like conducting an essay competition in three of the main schools in our area covering about 40 to 50 villages, for International Women's Day March 8th 2007. Two girls won first prize and all students were recognized with a certificate of participation. In April we supported Periya Vellikadu middle school which is more than 50 years old, to have its first annual day program.



Through discussions with community leaders and our village committee it was identified that lack of utilization of locally available institutions, such as schools was a major barrier to improving the quality of education. Many families preferred sending their children to far away or private schools, rather than to their own local village schools as they perceived that the quality in the local schools was not good. It became clear that there was an opportunity here to improve the schools in our focus villages and to ensure that all children could get quality education. With our village committee we started planning for a series of awareness programs and drive in our all

our seven villages to list all drop out children and those whose families could not afford to send their children to school. We provided school uniforms, school bags, notebooks and other materials to all drop out children, and to those children who came back and enrolled in their own village school. From this point on we have now increased enrollment in the two schools, Periya Veillikkadu Middle School and Kalpat Primary School that serves seven of our focus villages.



All children need to have a healthy and motivating environment to study. Therefore after improving enrollment, we took up first to improve the school environment. Imagine the children sitting on the floor and bending over their books, reading and writing all day in this manner. It is physically taxing, the children develop back and neck strains and over a period of time it affects the child's posture and may contribute to other problems such as spinal curvature and scoliosis. Having tables and benches ensures healthy school environment where the children are comfortable and able to effectively concentrate and study. The task of making the tables and benches for Periya Vellikadu school was given to a local enterprise run by

youth from our own villages, giving them an opportunity to get involved and benefit economically from the effort.

From this point on we have then taken special efforts to develop Periya Vellikadu School as a model school in our area. The school was provided with a comprehensive set of sports and play materials for introducing physical education for all the children. We provided a computer and introduced computer education and audio visual education for the students. Kalanjyam staff have been placed in the school to support / assist the teachers in the school instruction. Interactive teaching materials and aides are used with the children in primary classes.



Having done all this, our committee raised the question why not we bring exposure to the arts for the school children. Learning music can be very beneficial for a child's development, for it can bring forth their hidden talents, skills for listening, concentration, voice, breathing and much more, even while providing them a way for relaxation. So a trained music teacher from Chennai was identified and is now teaching Carnatic classical music once a week to all the classes. Similarly at the initiative of the



village committee and demand from students we have introduced drawing classes for all the children. An experienced drawing teacher living in the local area was identified and is now conducting classes once a week in the school. We strongly believe that these classes provide the opportunity to bring out different talents among the children and expand their creative potentials.

After the environment in the school, we thought that health and nutrition was something to be addressed. Therefore, to instill the importance of good nutrition and health among students, teachers and also the parents, we started providing fruit once a week to all the primary school children in the school. With support of VHN, the local sub center was also boosted and equipped with materials to provide the required first aid and health care to the school children. A dental health camp was also conducted in the school where all children received an oral exam and provided fluoride protectors for preventing dental caries.



Very importantly, we are making efforts to track each child's performance and improvements; we have a monthly tracking format where our staff assess each child on key benchmark indicators for measuring changes.



The overall response from the children, school and the community has been overwhelmingly positive. We believe that the success of this model lies in that now after less than a year of our involvement the community has taken upon itself to strengthen the school further. Recently the PTA has appointed 1 more teacher and under the schools initiative two more computers have been secured for the school and a full time computer teacher is being planned. In addition the community and school is taking it upon itself to bring 9th

and 10th to Periya Vellikkadu so that the children in the area can continue here for high school.



We have now started to focus on the two other primary schools in Kalpat and Dhamapuram. Both the schools have been provided with tables and mats for seating. Our staff spend half a day at the school interacting and teaching the children. In addition to the fruit we are also supplementing the noon meal in Kalpat school by adding extra vegetables everyday. In January 08 we will be providing a computer to each school and starting computer aided education to the children in both the schools

The pay off for all these efforts is the impact on the children, so next year we will come to you with the progress our children have made! We also hope to expand our education program in this coming year by taking up more schools from our villages.



 **Kalanjiyam**
Pathivugal

Penetrating and forming community links

Bringing together our village communities for meaningful participation in development and change, translates into being able to penetrate and mobilize the people. Many of our activities were planned and taken up in this spirit, in addition to specific project related activities

Reaching out to senior citizens:

An early program conducted was with the senior citizens from Kalpat village and subsequently in other villages where we discussed their views on the needs in the community. Where ever possible we also addressed the needs of the seniors; they were taken to eye camp, provided eye glasses and support for cataract surgery. In addition we provide good walking sticks to all the seniors in our villages to help them with their ability to walk upright. In this activity it is the children in the village who give the walking sticks to the elders, as a small way to bridge the gap that exists between the young and the old.



Involving local women's self help groups (SHGs):

Similarly meetings were organized and held among representatives from Women's SHGs from the nearby villages. A special May fest program brought together women from 5 villages while participating in a festive Kolam competition. This was a way to mobilize the women and give them a chance to display their inner talents / skills. It was turned into a festive occasion in the village, where everyone participated; the best kolam's were selected by other members from the local community and the winning kolams were given prizes.



Awareness program

Awareness programs have been conducted on protecting and preserving the environment using traditional art forms such as Thappu attam and Thudumbu attam. Another program under the theme 'Lack of education is a disability for life' was conducted in a number of our villages where we urged the community to utilize the local schools and make sure that all children, including girls, went to school.

Workshop with elected community leaders

Early in 2007 Kalanjiyam conducted three studies on HIV/AIDS among different segments: auto rickshaw drivers, school students and elected community leaders. These indicated a general lack of awareness about basics of HIV/AIDS particularly among elected community leaders, triggering us to conduct a series of follow up activities. On the occasion of World AIDS Day 2007, Kalanjiyam organized a workshop attended by more than 80 elected Panchayat representatives from 41 Panchayats/ 13 Councils in Lattur block, in partnership with the local Block Development Office. The intent of this was to bring a focus on the prevention aspects of HIV and advocate for them to address the issue locally and also to inform them about Kalanjiyam's program in the local villages.



Awareness raising through media and material development

The first step for bringing change is to make sure that there is awareness about the issues. Kalanjiyam has taken upon itself to advocate on a number of important issues and bringing them to the limelight!

On international women's day, we chose to highlight that women should be thinking about a most common health problem that is often not addressed: anemia. NFHS 3 conducted in 2005-2006 reports that 74% of children and 54% of women are anemic.

Promotional Anemia Campaign on Television

Four suitable messages were developed into promotional advertisements each for 30 seconds and three important and leading women: Dr. Kamala Selvaraj, MD, DGO; Arulmozhi, Advocate and Dr. I.S. Parveen Sultana, M.A., Ph.D, voiced these key messages on Anemia. These were telecast throughout the day on Makkal Television on March 8th 2007.

Promotional on Anemia broadcast on leading FM channel

Similarly two awareness ads were aired on SURYAM FM on Anemia all through the day on March 8th 2007.

Short Film on Vitamin A – 'A time to think now'

Loss of sight due to Vitamin A deficiency is yet another largely preventable health problem. While ample information and services are available on this issue, how many are really thinking about this issue? To bring this to the limelight a short film for 1.2 minutes duration was made involving the children from our own villages. The process of making the film was turned into an opportunity to impart messages to our communities on Vitamin A deficiency. A time to think now has been added to the South India Short Film Makers Association website <http://sisma.in/>.

Thaimei (Motherhood) promoting maternal health

Poor maternal health continues to be a health concern in our villages. A higher than acceptable number of women still die during child birth due to lack of awareness and too many children are still born with some form of disabilities. Recognizing this as an important issue, Kalanjiam decided to focus on developing material on pregnancy care to inform as many women and families across Tamil Nadu. We chose Dr. Kamala Selvaraj a leading Obstetrician / Gynecologist in India, to help us develop a video production Thaimei (Motherhood). Kalanjiam's Thaimei was supported by Maithri Educational and Charitable Trust working in Chennai by sponsoring copies for distribution all across Tamil Nadu.

Articles about Thaimei were printed in Hindu Metro plus, Adyar times, Tamil paper Jana Shakthi and monthly magazine Snegithi. **The reach of Thaimei VCD so far has been very promising.** Thaimei has been distributed to 1060 Women's Self Help groups in the blocks that we work in: Maduranthankam, Lattur and Chittampur blocks in partnership with other local NGOs. Through this we expect that the messages in Thaimei will reach nearly 25,000 women from these blocks and in addition other families in these villages. In addition Thaimei has been sent to public health officers at District Collectorates, public hospitals, and Magalir Thittam Project Coordinators (Women's Empowerment Program) in the state. We have distributed more than 500 copies to NGOs and 200 copies to individuals from many districts in Tamil Nadu.

Papparamittai - Children's Album

In a novel effort to promote for children to focus on developing their imaginative and creative mental abilities Kalanjiam is producing a children's album with stories told musically. Story telling, while having fun can enhance learning among children. The children's album entitled **PAPPARAMITTAI**, is a collection of familiar stories, retold musically; it is unique in that it is told by children to other children. Papparamittai will be released in February this year in a grand manner. We hope to bring this album to a wide audience of families and educational institutions in Tamil Nadu.



What's in the pipeline at Kalanjiyam in the coming year?

Think about what is the wealth of our society, that makes the community rich?
Well wait and watch for our RICH project in the coming year.



Kalanjiyam

We are here to listen, not to work miracles.
We are here to provide support for change.

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