

Auroville, May 2019

Dear Friends and Donors,

Multiple tasks:

Our days are quite busy with various activities happening simultaneously. With the **growth of Deepam** there is more work in all corners. Maintaining the buildings, the garden and the school bus became a constant task. Finally our new garage is ready to be used. Office work and administration is increasing steadily. Of course the **main focus of our work is with the children**, who have a broad range of disorders and there is the need of an **individual approach**. The **early intervention** for babies and small infants is very important. We have to work closely together with parents and doctors. The **day-care group** is well organised. Each child follows a schedule to receive therapies and education in individual sessions or in small groups. Health-care, creative and social stimulation is a big factor. Our youth is gradually integrated into the **vocational training centre** to learn different techniques. New children we assess and observe at first, talk to their parents and see all medical reports. At the beginning most children usually receive therapies in individual sessions – eventually they become integrated into the day-care group or into outside schools. Generally we observe that we see **more children with behavioural issues and autism** than before. This is a big challenge for our team and we need to provide the necessary training.

Maternity leave:

Two of our experienced team members had their second babies almost at the same time and are still on maternity leave. We miss them at Deepam. Luckily we have help from four volunteers from Germany and France. They are very engaged and even have experience in our field.

A branch in Nadukuppam:

For some time now we have had the idea of **bringing our expertise to a remote place** further away. Finally we **connected with another Auroville project at Nadukuppam**, which is about an hour away. There is already an established network in place to teach about environmental issues in schools. Initially we are allowed to use an existing building which we have made more pleasant for working with children. The preparation started already one year ago when we did a survey in remote villages to identify children with special needs. In the past months **we have trained Jansi and Kasturi**, who come from that region, with the aim to equip them to be able to regularly assist children with disabilities at the centre in Nadukuppam, with our continuous support. These two ladies are eager to learn and were a big help at Deepam in the past months.

A heart operation:

In one of these remote villages we found **four year old Pavithra** who was born with **cleft-lip and a hole in her heart**. Surgery was postponed as she was severely under weight. She still only weighs 10kg. A good cardiologist, suggested by the paediatric doctor who supports us tremendously, is ready to perform the heart surgery at a hospital in Chennai. Deepam will cover the costs of about 300.000 Rupees (about 4000€). Following the major surgery, necessary plastic surgeries could be performed in a more convenient hospital nearby, so that Pavithra will finally look nicer and be able to eat properly. Now it is up to the quite uneducated parents to accept our offer and to accompany their daughter through this process. We can only help if her parents cooperate with us!



Meeting with parents - the future of our students:

On a Sunday morning in March we had a pleasant parents' meeting. **The parents expressed gratitude** for the work done at Deepam and **satisfaction with the progress of their children**. From Deepam we gave the usual speech: "Please cut the nails of your child, do not send your child with head lice or fever, give a breakfast at home and healthy food". At the end of the meeting we kept the parents of our older students aside to talk about their future. The ones who have severe health issues or have very poor mental skills are not able to fit into work or training options outside. For them, Deepam offers a protected space where they follow simple tasks and a daily schedule. With the parents of **Nagamal** and **Vinoth**, for example, who have both been with us since 1992, we came to the understanding that they needed the safe space at Deepam. **Vinoth** became our busy gardener and **Nagamal** helps with the small children. Both get weekly pocket money in their hand and a monthly contribution to their own savings account. Nineteen year old **Dharani** is meanwhile very skilled in the technique of macramé and is able to follow instruction books. Though she has epilepsy, due to a severe neurological disorder which needs to be monitored, we made her a teacher's assistant at our vocational training centre. **Jayasudha**, who is already 36, is bound to her wheelchair and needs daily intensive physiotherapy. She is especially skilled in doing crochet and has started to sell some of her handicrafts from home with the help of her sister. For other students we aim indeed to get them independent. **Sumithra**, for example, finally, after eighteen years, was reading and writing which seemed impossible before. Selvi had noticed how much Sumithra was interested in cooking and initiated that, once a week, she prepares some healthy snack at Deepam, which is well received. Then Selvi told Sumithra that for cooking she needs to be able to read a recipe and to know about ingredients. Selvi started to make charts and pictures of vegetables and patiently repeated daily the same things with Sumithra. Now she is able to read and write the basics of the Tamil language. Sumithra's dream is to be an entrepreneur and to start her own restaurant. For three of our hearing impaired youth different ideas came up: **Ranjith** and **Ruthrapathy** have been introduced to all kinds of crafts at Deepam, but mostly love working with wood. We are in the process of finding suitable training options with some carpenters. **Hema** likes to be nicely dressed and is very interested in make-up. We are looking for the right person who could train her as a beautician.

Sarasu became a tailor:

We are **extremely proud of Sarasu** who is now twenty. When she was 1.5 yrs old she received her first hearing aids and has had a long history with us. Her family situation was always difficult, but she profited most from her education and the care at Deepam. With the aim to facilitate "a normal life" we have sent her early for tailoring training. Meanwhile she has her own electric stitching machine which enables her to take up small orders from home. Recently she got her first job and has received her first salary! Sarasu keeps in close touch with us for the maintenance of her hearing aids and for emotional support.

We would like to share some new photographs with you. Please find in the gallery of our homepage: www.deepam-auroville.in these folders: "Vocational Training Center" and "Deepam Celebration".

The children and the team members at Deepam send you greetings from the hot summer in India,
Angelika Ehrle und Lawrence Selvi

