

January 2023 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

It is good to be in touch after an extended break- we have lots of news, so I hope you will enjoy our update.

Education

After two and a half years of Covid disruption, life is nearly back to normal. Schools and colleges opened approximately four months late, in September. Some schools have added short catchup courses for children who hadn't been able to access online lessons, but there are many who will be at a great disadvantage in the coming year.

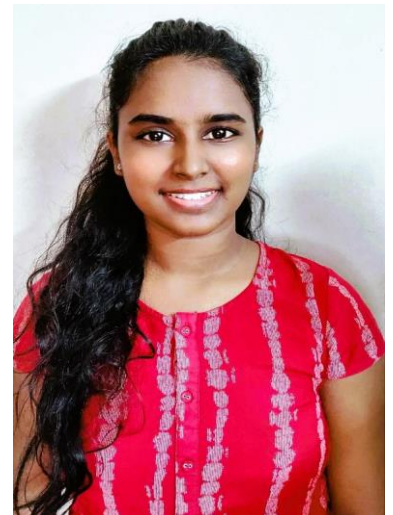
During the past year 26 new families have started getting some level of support from the Vine Charitable Trust, 18 families asking for help with school fees and eight who have children doing degree courses. In most of these families the breadwinner had lost their job because of Covid and due to their lack of education, they have struggled to find jobs other than the lowest paid work.

Many of the young people who VCT accept on their books have experienced different kinds of disadvantage in their lives and so when their child finally finds work, it has a huge impact on the life of the whole family. The following is the story of one of the eight sponsored young people who completed University in the summer and has found work.

VCT has supported Fiona since class 8. Her father is an alcoholic and does not work. Her mother works as a teacher and sent Fiona to boarding school to protect her from her father who had become abusive. Fiona did well at school, but when she left, she struggled to adjust to family life with her father, who continued to be abusive. It is therefore amazing that she did so well through university and has now completed and excelled in her M.Com, getting a distinction.

She told VCT staff that she was not only very grateful for the monetary support they had given her for her education, but she was also thankful for how they had supported her emotionally as she struggled at home. This is a wonderful testament to the holistic approach that VCT have in their work.

Fiona got a work placement in a company during her studies and is now working in the account section. She has a good salary and is very happy to be there. Her job has made a huge difference not only to Fiona but to her whole family. If you might be interested in changing the life of a family through sponsorship in this way then please do get in touch. We have a number of children on our waiting list. For more information about the difference sponsorship can make please watch our latest annual AIC service where some of the young people are interviewed (The link is given below)



Older people

Grace our office manager reports:

'It is lovely to see our senior citizens back at the office and able to socialize again. During lockdown we had to send all their aid through post office money orders and we missed having them around and they missed coming'



Now only those who are sick or bed bound are sent their money. Beryl is one of these. She was hit by a car two years ago and has barely left the house since. Due to lack of moving around, her mobility is severely limited now. She was so happy to have visitors when Grace and John arrived to undertake an annual monitoring visit. Fortunately, Beryl is in the minority, as everyone else has returned to the office. In fact this December VCT have been having Carols with the older people each Wednesday which has been a great joy to all. 98% of the older people VCT supports have been vaccinated and have kept well, which is great news.

As many of you will know, our work with older people has faithfully been supported by Calcutta Tiljallah Relief for many years and so it is with great sadness that we inform you know that Blair Williams, who has been our key contact with CTR over many years, has recently passed away. We pray for his family as they come to terms with his loss and give thanks for his many years of service to those struggling with poverty in India.

General Update

The monitoring work that John and Grace do, is an important part of VCT's work, however, AIC also has a responsibility to monitor the work that VCT is doing in Chennai. We are regularly in touch with VCT staff and trustees, through email and phone, however due to Covid it had been a while since we had visited, therefore we were very grateful when Jonathan Thurley (who used to be an AIC Trustee) agreed to visit VCT and undertake some basic monitoring of paperwork and processes, while he was visiting India in September. He commented:

'After 33 years of involvement on and off with AIC and VCT, it was a great pleasure to see how the organisation has evolved and continued to help a great number of families in need, to better fulfil their potential. It's a privilege to still be involved in a small way after all these years.'

He noted that the processes that have been put in place, helped to ensure that those who were most in need were the ones who were given support. In particular, he noted the usefulness of the annual monitoring visits undertaken for every beneficiary family and individual, like the one to Beryl above, which helped to check on the information they were being told in the office.



We hope that two trustees will be able to visit in 2023 and bring back more news of the wonderful work that VCT continue to do.

As mentioned earlier, we have had another AIC service and this can be found on YouTube <https://youtu.be/uO2rgM2v-s0> There you will find news about different parts of the work that VCT are doing and also an update on the new church that the People of the Way (PoTW) fellowship have been building.

People of the Way Church

In September, with much celebration, PoTW moved their main service to the new building in Ericuncherri. One of their first services, was the dedication of Abi and Joel's daughter Eliana, which was a great joy for the whole fellowship, but particularly for Grace and David. PoTW now hold the bilingual English and Tamil meeting at the new site in the morning and the Tamil service, which had been meeting there for a number of months already, is held in the evening.



This month it is seven years since the building work began and there are still some outstanding items to be completed including the plumbing and the lift, which they now need by law, before the building can be signed off. Do ask if you would like to donate.

As we close, we wanted to mention that a number of years ago an elderly Anglo-Indian lady generously made a considerable bequest in her will to AIC. This has allowed us to make long term plans for supporting the many young people who come through VCT. When VCT takes on a new child we wish to ensure that they will be able to be supported throughout their education. This kind of gift helps us to do this. A bequest or an in Memoriam gift can be a wonderful way to bless others, through giving the gift of education, which in turn will build strong self sufficient families in in the future. If any of you are interested in doing this, then please contact us for further details.

We thank you for your prayers and continued support of the work in Chennai and wish you a very happy and peaceful New Year

Yours with love

The AIC Trustees

Rachel Thurley, Sarah Thurley, Tim Martindale, Kirsten Masson, Jude Lechmere, Roz Brench, Suzanne Hamilton, Matthew Gunton