



**News from DIYA's intervention centre for children with autism,  
Tirunelveli, South India**

**January-March 2019**

Happy New Year to all! We're just back home in Kodaikanal after much travelling over the Christmas break. We've had a wonderful time meeting friends and family over this joyful season.

**Tirunelveli:** We've decided that we're not moving the venue we'd been considering for a while. We had a few disagreements over who would pay for improvements on the property. While initially it was quite disappointing, we later came to know that the Government hospital just across the road from the property have now established an early intervention centre themselves for children with autism. It would have been a duplication of services, had we moved there.

We now have about 10 young children under 6 who are accessing our services. The remaining are older kids, some well into their teen years. By God's immense grace through the provision of the CM's insurance scheme, we are now self reliant financially. We are empanelled with the scheme for another 2 years and our finances should be OK until then.

We've also been able to recruit a few, new staff: Parameshwari, who is an engineer by profession but has chosen to work with children with special needs. She has been quite an asset to our work; Rachel, who is a teaching assistant, also does not have any formal qualifications; Jasmine, a volunteer. We are still lacking an occupational therapist. Please pray for the right person to be brought in soon.

We recently had our Christmas celebrations with games, food and gifts for the children. We even featured in the next day's newspaper!



*Above:* The nativity scene.



*Above:* A game for the little ones.

**Kodaikanal:** We have the following prayer requests from Van Allen 1) Financial independence of the hospital. 2) We desperately need an anaesthetist. 3) The hospital has several ongoing litigations; pray for a change of hearts so the hospital can function in peace. We have peace over the decision we have taken. However, Kumar plans to be out in Tirunelveli and Madurai for two days of the week. This is to give himself more operating opportunities. Please pray for safety as he travels; and for the right patients to benefit from his service.

**Ramu:** You might all remember Ramu for whose leg lengthening procedure, we were generously given funds. His treatment is nearly complete now. However, the much anticipated return to school has not happened. I think partly it is to do with the family (Ramu himself) dragging his feet. The second is also the lack of schools that accommodate children with mobility needs (even though his legs are more or less equal length now, he remains slightly unstable on his feet). Please pray that he will make the most of the opportunities he has been given.



**Above: Ramu before surgery    Above: After surgery**

**Muneeshwari:** Please also pray for Muneeshwari, an eight year old with spina bifida, whom Kumar recently operated on. She has very little use of her legs and preferably needs to get around in a wheelchair. Schooling for children with mobility issues remain very difficult in Tamil Nadu (possibly India) and though mandated by law, is difficult to uphold. Muneeshwari currently attends a Tamil medium school, which her parents carry her to; once inside, she is stuck to the same spot where they left her in the morning. We approached a couple of private schools, offering to raise funds for a lift/ramps. Neither has obliged. This is an area of high importance as children with learning abilities (even bright) are in special school set ups meant for children with learning disabilities. Please pray that doors open and she is able to attend a barrier free English medium school (she wants to learn in English) from June 2019.



**Above:** Muneeshwari with Kumar

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