



BLOSSOM PROJECTS

Blossom Projects

2022 Annual Report

Our mission is to empower youth and their families in economically and socially marginalized communities in India through education and economic well-being.

Blossom Projects is a US non-profit organization, with 501 (c)(3) status #26-3130349

Address: P.O Box 1226, Menlo Park, CA 94026

Website: www.blossomprojects.org



Introduction

Dear Blossom Friends and Supporters,

We're inspired by this quote from Archbishop Desmond Tutu:

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

2022 taught us that despite the darkness due to stress, disease, and worldwide suffering in the preceding two years, our students, teachers, and families had hope in our mission and the programs we deliver. They stayed connected and engaged; enrolled and committed to education; and celebrated our success.

A main focus in 2022 was to smoothly transition the organization with the retirement of its founder and long-term supporter Dayamudra Dennehy in 2021. A transition can be difficult but also an opportunity for learning, unexpected growth, and scaling new heights.

In June, Eric Lopez rejoined our board. Eric brings DEI leadership, philanthropy, and entrepreneurship to our organization. Read his profile [here](#). We also had new staff join and many distinguished visitors and speakers visited our students.

As we look back at 2022, we successfully navigated the transition and celebrated new beginnings in small and big ways—new supporters, new partnerships, and new success stories.

Thank you for your support!

Our Vision Stays Strong

*A caste-free society based on
liberty, equality, and
inclusion.*



Thank you for your support in empowering Dalit and all caste-oppressed youth to re-engage with education, set goals, and achieve their dreams.

Pushpinder Lubana
Board President

Eric Lopez
Board Member

Arun Kumar
Executive Director

Chithra Rajagopalan
Board Member/Treasurer

Resilience in Action

Restarting our programs in full capacity

The team on the ground in Kerala faced post-COVID challenges with resilience. Restarting our programs to full capacity was an opportunity to express our commitment. Witnessing our dedication increased the loyalty and faith that the local communities and villages have in our program.

During the pandemic, we had to give up the lease on classroom buildings and office space. What was originally the designated boys hostel with an attached kitchen and playground adjusted to make room for classrooms, a library, computer lab, and space for the office staff. The team approached the challenge with creativity and intention. Through June and July, the team worked hard to launch a publicity campaign for recruitment for the 2022-2023 batch while preparing the physical space to stretch to meet the demand.

In previous years, our staff reached out to local villages and families through phone campaigns or door-to-door visits. In 2022, we intentionally leveraged technology first by using WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms for our recruitment efforts and were met with great success. With minimal in-person, door-to-door travel to remote villages, we were successful in recruiting 30 students!



Our senior alumni students joined us in this effort to restart our program. They returned to our hostels, stayed with us for weeks to clean, construct, move, and manage what we needed to get restarted. Their presence boosted our spirits and fueled our return to full capacity in 2022.

In August, we inaugurated our 9th batch with 15 boys and 3 girls. Eventually, we grew to 19 boys and 10 girls. Despite growing success in difficult times, there continues to be challenges that need solving including the digital gender divide and, with the help of our supporters, we are working on culturally informed solutions for the community.

We also hired a new administrative officer, office staff, hostel wardens, cooks, and part-time teachers. A few of our senior students stayed for a few more weeks to support us providing a “big brother” mentoring role to the new students.

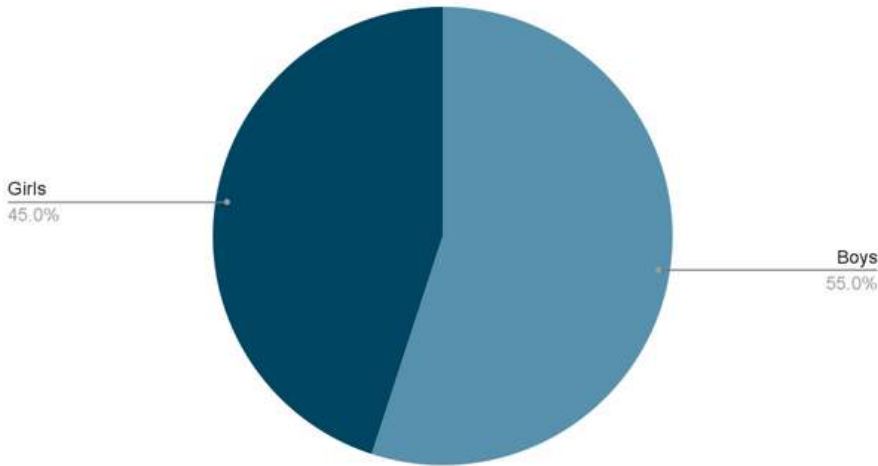
For a reminder on the different learning tracks we offer to students who have dropped out of the state educational system, visit our site.



Residential batch of 2022-2023

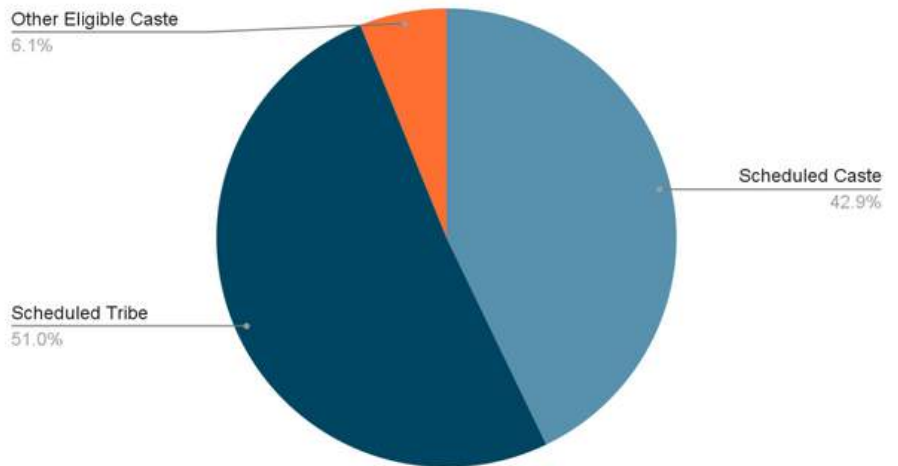
A snapshot of who we served in 2022

Blossom Projects Gender Breakdown

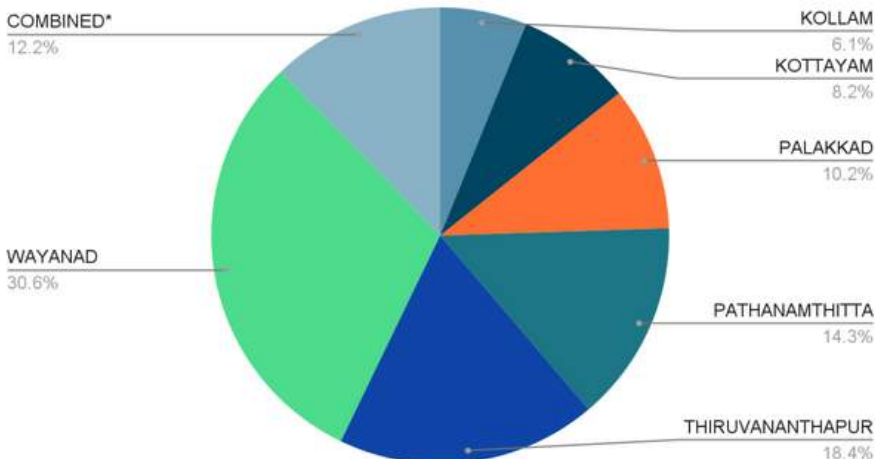


Over the years, our program is slowly achieving gender parity.

Based on surveys, the majority of students who entered into our program pass high school, enroll in higher education, and/or secure jobs.



Students' Kerala Home Districts



100% of the students who enroll with us belong to marginalized castes.

Vaishakh: A story of success and long- term impact



Vishakh (in red shirt) with his brother and father at Blossom Projects

The long-term impact of our program on transforming Dalit students is best captured in the story of our alumnus and youth leader Vaishakh. He joined Blossom Projects in 2019 as an intensive literacy student who lacked basic reading and writing skills. Before Blossom Projects, Vaishakh lived with his brother and father in a hut made of plastic sheets and poles on rubber plantation lands in Chengara that had been taken away by the government through the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1963. Upper caste landowners kept the land, the laborers from the lower castes that worked the land became landless. The landless laborers lived with no electricity or running water. The family barely made enough to eat a meal a day.

Vaishakh has spent most days worrying how to make it to the next day with the resources the family had. He was eager to learn and go to school but the poverty and oppression his family and community faced had broken his confidence and will. It didn't help that there was drug and alcohol use in his family.

Vaishakh finished our 10-month program, transformed by the attention and safe environment. With no prospects in his village, he continued to stay with us in our extended program for 11th and 12th grades and eventually successfully completed 12th grade through online Kerala state exams.

Vaishakh stepped into being a student leader in the hostel and began to take on more responsibility for managing the program. In 2020, when he returned to his village due to the pandemic, Vaishakh started a tutoring center in the village for young students. With little resources, he offered them homework help and ensured that they were motivated to study. Through generous donations, our team sent him books and classroom supplies to help in the local efforts.

Vaishakh was determined to succeed. After successfully completing his 12th grade in 2022, he joined a mobile technician course in a nearby town. During this time he was hired as an assistant boys warden on our campus. This job gave him boarding and lodging and the stability he needed to study and work. While studying for the mobile technician course, Vaishakh also took a job in a local textile shop as a salesperson. He borrowed the hostel bicycle to navigate two jobs and his training program.

Today, Vaishakh has moved to the big city of Trivandrum to start his journey as a professional adult. He is independent, resourceful, and educated. He has a decent job and enough to make ends meet. Vaishakh's story of scaling new heights of success has only just begun!



Vishakh (in black shirt) with his younger brother, Vishal. Later Vishal enrolled in Blossom Projects too.

Highlights



Online Communicative English classes bridge the gap

With the support of the Center for Learning and Empowerment (CLE Trust) a Bangalore-based NGO, our students are taking steps to bridging the gap to communicative English skills. CLE Trust provides online teaching support to non-governmental organizations working on the ground in the educational sector. Since the Covid-19 lock down we have been partnering with CLE Trust to provide Blossom students two-hour Basic English online lessons for three days a week, free of cost. These classes continued through all of 2022. CLE Trust's caring, empathetic, and student-focused teachers make a huge difference for our students and their confidence in speaking in English.



Thank you CLE Trust!

Guest Speakers

Knowledge Sharing and Role Modeling of Success

Several eminent guest speakers in the fields of art, culture, movies, business, and government visited our programs and shared their expertise and experience. Their stories were very inspiring for our students who saw them as role models for their own path in life. This year we had motivational speakers, business people, government officials, artists, poets, movie directors, writers, teachers, and social workers volunteer their time.



We want to thank the following guest speakers who presented motivating talks to our students:

Shobha L , M Phil, Sociology teacher

Topic : Social Morality and Character formation

Udayan Paravoor, Motivational speaker

Topic: Confidence building

Kalesh Keshavan, Govt. employee in Revenue department

Topic: Importance of education

Satheesh Pandanadu, folk singer

Rakesh K Rajan, Associate Director in Malayalam film industry

Topic: Cinema and career

Nayana Mohan, Junior Health Inspector at Local Primary Health center of Kerala

Antony Kunnath, Founder of Planet Kerala, a nonprofit organization

Topic: Importance of education

Jayan , Board member of Planet Kerala, a nonprofit organization

Topic: Willingness to help

Abraham, Retired Teacher

Topic : Importance of education

Manoj V, Govt employee in BSNL

Topic : Social responsibility

Dr.Satheesh kumar, Professor @ Panampilly college,
Chalaky

Kalesh Karthikeyan, Teacher in Govt high school,
Trivandrum

John. K. Paul, Associate director in Film industry

Roshin A Sam, Social worker

Mrs.Lalitha Parackal, Teacher

Topic: Character formation

C S Rajesh, Poet

Topic : Influence of literature in social transformation

Nabiya Ethiraj, Social worker

Anish, Police officer

Topic : Importance of Govt job

Mrs.Sini, Teacher

Topic: Origin of Malayalam language

Abhilash, Kerala Yukthivadi organization

**We appreciate the efforts of our Kerala
community to inspire our students. It takes a
village to raise a child!**



Board Members Visit Kerala

Board members visit students to inspire and be inspired

Board member Chithra Rajagopalan visited our program in Kerala in August. Even though it was a brief day visit, students enjoyed interacting with her. Chithra was accompanied by her friend, Dennis Thomas, Associate Vice President, Learning & Development at ESAF Bank, who gave a motivational talk to the students. Their visit ignited students' aspirations and curiosity. They were able to address questions from the students on the future opportunities for higher education and career paths.



In October, our Board President Pushpinder Lubana visited the project with her mother, Harbans Pelia, a retired educator, for a week. Pushpinder led a five-day leadership skills development camp titled “Collaboration, Creativity, and Confidence.” Mrs. Pelia also led communicative English classes to coach the students to overcome their shyness in speaking in English. The students also enjoyed collaboration-building games, drawing, music, and dance.

The students engaged in energetic debates on topics of gender, sexuality, gender stereotypes and other topics that they may have hesitated to discuss before. The workshop ended with a day-long trip to Azheekal Beach, ride up to the observatory, and dinner. The day was filled with lots of fun, singing, and dance. Many of our teenage students found it as a great opportunity to explore the world outside the hostel or their village.



In-Person fundraiser in California

Supporters, activists, and artists came together to support Blossom Projects in Menlo Park, CA

Yajur, a Bay Area musician performed music in support of our students at our first in-person fundraiser in a private home in Menlo Park. This was followed by a Kathak performance by two young dancers from the Noorani Dance Company.

Board members, advisors, and supporters enjoyed music and home-cooked Indian food on a balmy April afternoon.

Key speakers included: Vice Mayor of Menlo Park, Cecilia Taylor, Maitri board member and former President, Sonya Pelia, and Blossom board advisor Abha Singhvi .



Dignity in how we live and learn

Through a generous local donor/supporter, Mr Ebrahim in Kerala and a separate CSR grant from an India-based business, we were able to provide our students with what we believe are basic needs for learning and thriving: desks, chairs, and beds.

So far our students studied on mats on the floor and slept on the same floor. With 20 new bunk beds and 40 desks and chairs, our students' sense of dignity, belonging, and personal space is immeasurable. Not sleeping on the floor and having your own assigned bed and bedding also creates personal safety, better sleeping habits, and improved hygiene. Local, local friends in Kerala donated a bicycle to the boys hostel for local traveling. This has been a tremendous help to the warden to run errands in town.

Thank you to our supporters!



Winter Camp

Winters are for learning and fun

We wrapped up the year in December with a 10-day camp led by our retired founder, Dayamudra Dennehey from the USA. Dayamudra led the morning sessions of the camp on building 21st century skills, with afternoons devoted to academics and invited speakers and talks. Days were full with various activities from 7 am to 8 pm but the students remained enthusiastic and engaged.

Creative Days

Monthly creative days bring out the creators, dancers, and musicians

The last day of every month is celebrated as our creative day. All the students and staff have to prepare and share a performance. It is a great opportunity for the students to express themselves and overcome their stage fear. Most students have never faced an audience. Each month, we see how students improve in their confidence and skills. Every creative day was filled with songs, dance, drumming, speeches, acting, and drawing.



Financial Report

- CY 2022

We raised \$36K in donations during CY2022. Thank you for your support. Here is Blossom Project's financial report as of December 31st, 2022.

Financial Statement	CY 2022 Total
Donations	\$36,530
Total Donations	\$36,530
Expenditures	
Bank Charges & Fees	\$62
Office Supplies& Software	\$2,034
Other Business Expenses	\$42
PayPal Services Fees	\$145
Postage & Delivery	\$348
Program Expense	\$21,024
Total Expenditure	\$23,655
Net Operating Revenue	\$12,876
Net Revenue	\$12,876



In Closing

**Thank You for
the donations,
love & support!**

Please continue to invest in this transformational change!

Your support means students from caste-oppressed communities are able to study in a safe and nurturing environment with access to clothing, medical care, books, meals, and emotional support. Each student we transform becomes a catalyst for change among their peers, families, and communities. The positive effects are compounded and our work goes beyond the boundaries of our buildings and classrooms. Thank you for your continued support.