

# Our children

## Education in Chembakolli

The Adivasi school is called Vidyodaya. It means 'the dawn of learning'.

- In the past, Adivasi children did not go to school. Lessons in the government schools were taught in Tamil, the state language, which the children from Chembakolli did not understand. They spoke their own tribal languages. The government did not recognise these languages and, because they treated the Adivasis as outcasts, did not provide them with their own schools.
- But all this changed when the Vidyodaya School opened. When the children start school, they are taught in their own language. Then, as they get older, they also learn Tamil and English. This means that they can pass the education 'standards' set by the government – and, if they want to, transfer to state secondary schools to study for college or university entrance.
- School days begin very early for the children of Chembakolli. They have to get up as soon as the sun rises. After washing and dressing, they have their breakfast and then walk through the forest to the main road. Here they are picked up by the school buses or jeeps, which take them on the half-hour journey to Gudalur. They arrive at school just before 9 o'clock.
- Vidyodaya Primary and Nursery School stands in its own grounds, on the edge of Gudalur, surrounded by tall trees. It is built in the traditional south Indian style – long and low with small windows and plenty of shade to keep the rooms cool. There are two classrooms and an office in the main building, and a large open-sided assembly hall across the playground.



### Talking points

- The 'Our children' section of the poster focuses on education. What other parts of the Adivasi saying shown on the front of the poster does education link to?
- Why didn't the children of Chembakolli go to school in the past?
- How did things change when the Vidyodaya School opened? Why is it important that the Adivasi children are taught in their own language first of all?
- What kind of a future can the whole community look forward to, now that their children go to school?

