



INDIA

Marist Schools in P.Udayapatti, Tamil Nadu, India.

A primary boys school and secondary co-educational school in a rural village. The school serves families in a 10km radius, who, for the most part, make their living off the land. The primary school has about 350 students and the high school 1000. In addition, the school hosts a vocational education centre that teaches young adults to sew clothing.

The school is 50km from the city of Trichy in the centre of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The local economy depends on receiving the annual monsoon rains, and in recent times these have become unpredictable. The area around P. Udayapatti is a particularly poor area and 'off the beaten track' as far as Government services are concerned. Trichy is the location of the Brothers' administration and training centre.

The Brothers took charge of an existing primary school in 1988 and developed the secondary school up to year twelve in the following years. The Government pays for half of the teaching staff, the other half is funded by school fees, and partnerships with other Marist students throughout the world.



People:

The diversity of India's population of one billion is reflected in the student population, which is 85% Hindu, 10% Muslim and 5% Christian. Each day 200 needy students receive a free lunch (of rice and curry), provided by the Government. Most of the students are the children of small farmers, craftsmen, small businessmen and landless day labourers – people who have to find work from day to day.

Young People:

A good number of students come to school by bike, others by local buses, others walk. Students have to be highly self-motivated, since life is tough and opportunities few. They are interested in sports – cricket and soccer for boys, volleyball and netball for girls. Cultural activities of traditional dance and music feature in many celebrations.

A good number of graduates move on to higher education studies – undergraduate degrees, teachers colleges, nursing, IT and business studies etc. – and some into the trades such as welding, carpentry, motor mechanics. Access to the better of these institutions and later, employment, is highly competitive, and further complicated by issues of caste, quotas and corruption.

Marists

Currently there are four Indian Brothers on the full-time teaching staff, including the headmaster of the primary school. Most of the teachers are Hindus, but they have a strong appreciation of the Marist spirit and our international character.

Funding

In 2002, the monsoon failed and the water supply system for the school was inadequate. Australian Marist students donated \$5000 which was matched by European funds so that a new well could be dug and the school can remain open.