ADRA is supporting after school programs, summer camps, health fairs and other educational efforts to ignite dreams of these talented children.

The people of Chennai, India, understand poverty firsthand. In this sprawling city of 5 million people, more than 1 million live in slums. Many are refugees from nearby Sri Lanka who fled to India to escape civil war.

Although children living in these neighborhoods have access to the Indian school system, few embrace education. Skipping school is common, and many parents are held so tightly in the grip of poverty that they can't imagine that their children could ever escape.

Vellin, a mother from the Anna Nagar slum, says her 13-year-old son, Santhash, didn't care about school at all. Instead, he spent much of his time wandering around with the neighborhood boys and getting into trouble. "It's true-I used to skip school a lot and go down to the beach and get into fights," Santhash says.

But things are changing for children in the Anna Nagar slum. ADRA operates a childhood development project aimed at opening the eyes of slum children to their futures by giving them the opportunity to learn and play creatively.

After-school ADRA clubs at a local community center teach dance, drawing, yoga, and debate. Volunteers also help reinforce the fundamental math and reading lessons the children get at school. Health camps provide free medical checkups and information on nutritional cooking for mothers. School scholarships help parents afford backpacks and other necessities, and ADRA summer camps give children constructive activities to keep them off the streets during the summer.

"Santhash really enjoyed making his science project for summer camp. The experience changed him a lot. Now when he plays, he plays creatively," Vellin says. "Before ADRA came, my son wouldn't listen to me at all. He's completely changed. Now he's obedient and well-behaved."

Parents are amazed at the changes they are seeing in their children. Empowered by an open and constructive learning environment and surrounded by adults who believe in them and encourage their talents, these once neglected children are blossoming. With your help, ADRA can continue developing the potential of neglected individuals such as these in Chennai and around the world.

Choose to believe in someone today. Your gift can jump-start someone's future right now!

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