Friends of Kalangarai

Supporting the empowerment of widowed women of Kalangarai to realize their abilities and worth and attain sustainable livelihoods.

Summer 2026
NEWSLETTER

International Widows Day

On June 23rd, we observed International Widows Day (IWD). It was **a day to raise awareness of the voices of 258 million widows in the world** and to mobilize the support they need. We celebrated the progress of these women who are often without the same legal rights and opportunities as men. Globally, women have on average, 67% of the legal rights that men have. This means they can't take out a loan, sign a contract, register a business, or even work without permission from their husband or a male guardian.[1] The statistics are even worse for widowed or single women. Yet, women play a major role in building a country's economy, society, and advancing its environment and peacebuilding. Through the efforts of the NGO Kalangarai, widowed and single women in India are building businesses, growing food, caring for their families, educating their children and leading their communities. By investing in women, everyone gains!

[1] Gates Foundation, *The Optimist*, theoptimist@communications.gatesfoundation.org, March 2026.

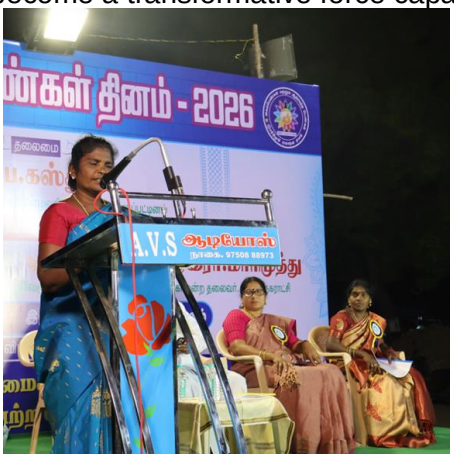
NEWS FROM KALANGARAI

International Widows' Day Convention

Kalangarai participated in organizing a Widows' Day Convention at a public venue in Nagapattinam. **Around 500 widows and other single women gathered to celebrate the occasion, reaffirm their solidarity, and collectively advocate for their rights, dignity, and social justice.** The gathering provided a vibrant platform for dialogue, advocacy, and inspiration.

Throughout the convention, participants reiterated that widows continue to face social stigma, economic insecurity, and limited access to government entitlements despite their resilience and contributions to society. The gathering underscored the urgent need for comprehensive public policies that guarantee livelihood security, equal opportunities, social protection, and freedom from discrimination. It also emphasized that widows should be recognized as rights holders rather than beneficiaries of charity.

The International Widows' Day Convention concluded with a renewed commitment to strengthen the widows' movement across Tamil Nadu. The event successfully amplified the voices of widows, brought their long-pending demands to the attention of elected representatives and the wider public, and reinforced the movement's determination to continue advocating for justice, equality, dignity, and inclusive development. The convention stood as a powerful reminder that when widows unite, they become a transformative force capable of shaping a more just and compassionate society.





Kalangarai Training Centre Ground-breaking



Construction of the new Training Centre in Mayiladuthurai district has begun. **Kalangarai held the foundation-stone-laying ceremony on 31st July.** The leaders of the Widows Movement and the staff participated in the ceremony. On 4th August, pits were taken to prepare the beams. We hope to finish by March 2027.

Career Guidance initiative for the Children of Widows

This past spring, Kalangarai conducted a **community outreach program to empower children of widows and single women through education and career guidance.** The staff visited nearly 120 families in the villages to understand their realities, focusing on identifying children's educational needs and fostering relationships based on dignity, compassion, and social inclusion. This outreach helped gather insights into the aspirations of widows and single women, which informed the development of a Career Guidance Program. Held over two days, the program benefited around 170 children and youth.

The program offered practical advice on higher education opportunities, scholarships, government welfare schemes, reservation policies, career planning, and skill development pathways. By providing relevant information and promoting informed choices, the initiative aimed to increase access to education and enhance long-term livelihood prospects.

Field interactions by the educators uncovered significant barriers such as financial hardship, social stigma, gender discrimination, and caste-based exclusion. Despite these obstacles, parents showed strong commitment to their children's education and held hopes for a brighter future.

Widows and single women appreciated the personalised guidance and support provided to their children, viewing it as an investment in their future and a source of lasting hope. This initiative highlights that targeted career guidance combined with field engagement can create meaningful opportunities for vulnerable youth and help break social and economic cycles of disadvantage.

We will be able to help these students pursue and complete their studies with the educational support of Friends of Kalangarai. We also help in the best possible way with employability opportunities.





COMING EVENTS

Join us for our FALL FESTIVAL FUNDRAISER

Sunday, September 27, 2026
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Mark T. Small - Acoustic Guitarist
Anaga Aditya - Classical Indian Dancer
Farm-to-Table Cuisine - Silent Auction

THE KEITH FARM
775 Horseback Road
Westport, MA 02790



Tickets: $75 per person - Available online

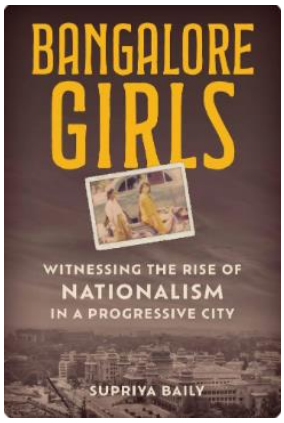
To purchase tickets & more information

100% of the event's ticket sales will go toward the programs for the widows' businesses and their children's education.

Join us for our next Book Group

Bangalore Girls: Witnessing the Rise of NATIONALISM in a Progressive City
By Supriya Baily

This is a special live book discussion with the author Supriya Baily
Friday, August 28, at 4:00 (ET)



Location in person:
Friends of Kalangarai
227 Union Street – Suite 707,
New Bedford, MA 02740

To attend the group via Zoom:
Register Here

A Special Thanks to Kerry, Her Family & Friends

A Summer Soiree Fundraiser

To celebrate International Widows Day locally, **Kerry Staniunas, a former intern at Friends of Kalangarai, organized a Summer Soiree at the Quonset Davisville Yacht Club in Kingstown, RI**. The event featured a summer buffet, raffle, and screening of the documentary, "Women of Truth and Courage." With a matching gift, **the event raised $4,750 to support widowed and single women in Kalangarai programs.** The funds are providing ten daughters of widows with tuition to attend community college, the college lunch program for all students, and help to replace thatched roofs for ten women who urgently need repairs before the monsoon.

Thank you to Kerry and her family--Lucille & Curt Dionne, Susan & John Staniunas, and Miguel DeMedeiros—for making the event successful!





Friends of Kalangarai is a U.S.-based 501(C)3 nonprofit that supports community-based programs for widowed/abandoned women in South India through fundraising, education and research.
https://kalangarai-india.org