

# BHARATHI TRUST

## ANNUAL REPORT 2007 - 2008

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*Our Sincere Thanks to...*

*Bharathi Trust would like to express its sincere gratitude to,*

*HIVOS,*

*ASHA for education,*

*Foundation Roger Riou.,*

*Action Aid International,*

*Malteser International and*

*Quinoa*

*for their continued support and constructive partnership for building up people's movement, educating the tribal children and Livelihood Support to the victims of Tsunami and flood who were the disadvantaged lot and marginalised .*

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**Bharathi Trust** since its inception has been working with Irula tribe in Thiruvallur, Vellore and Cuddalore districts with main focus of promoting and building up these communities as a collective forum, liaison with the government for obtaining schemes and programmes ( patta land, group housing, hand pumps, joint cultivation etc.)

The Trust works intensively on human right-based issues to curb/check atrocities and discrimination against Irulas. Bharathi Trust is also involved in supporting their livelihood options as they had lost everything due to Tsunami. As the condition called for immediate intervention for sustainable livelihood rehabilitation of Irulas Bharathi Trust scaled up their work in Cuddalore district.

### **Goal of Bharathi Trust: “A Just and Equal Society”**

**Purpose of Projects undertaken: “Poor and disadvantaged sections of the society are empowered to realise their rights effectively and in a sustained manner”**

The Trust feels proud to have associated with the development of the marginalised people and continues to work with them in the following programme areas,

#### **Program Areas of Bharathi Trust are:**

- Education for the Disadvantaged,
- Empowerment of Irula tribals who are marginalised.
- Releasing of bonded labourers and Rehabilitation through sustainable methods.

## **Part II – Empowerment of Irulas:**

### **1. Awareness Camps**

The purpose of these awareness camps is to create awareness in the Irula community to take stock of the situation they are placed in comparison to the other communities. Through these camps they are taught the importance of unity among themselves, the need to fight for their basic rights. The importance of education for their children, general health and hygiene is also stressed. The various government schemes for them were also highlighted and the importance of the Irula community organization ‘SARPAM’ and its activities towards the alleviation of social problems like dowry, inequality in wages, property rights, child labour and problem of drinking amongst the men folk were explained.

#### **Details of Awareness camps:**

Name of District	Name of Taluk	Camp Date	No. Of Participants		Out Reach	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
Thiruvallur	Uthukotai	14.05.07	60	90	125	155
Vellore	Katpadi, Gudiattam	20.05.07	75	125	150	175
Vellore	Thirupattur, Vaniampadi	04.07.07	60	95	250	350
Cuddalore	Chidambaram	06.08.07	75	90	350	400
Vellore	Walaja, Arcot	30.10.07	70	95	365	440
Thiruvallur	Thiruthani, palli	29.11..07	65	85	390	415
Vellore	Arakkonam	16.12.07	55	110	360	450
Thiruvallur	Ponneri, gumdi	23.02.08	60	90	325	415

#### **Achievements:**

Through the above conducted Awareness camps the Irulas realised their plight was very pathetic when compared to the other community people. They have become aware of their situation and feel the need for the unity among themselves. They were made aware that they could fight for their rights only if they are united. The need for their own Sangam / Association was stressed. The existing / available government welfare schemes were informed to them. As a result, both the districts were sensitised to form Sarpam Sangam.

These Awareness camps have also resulted in creating and awakening among the Irula community to send their children to the schools instead of sending them for work as child labour. It has also served the purpose in making them adhere to their personal hygiene and better health.

The active leaders of Sarpam played the role of motivators, leader’s mentors and the role model for the Irulas. Role-play, street play were organised by the cultural team in the camps. The theme of role-plays was Police harassment, Non-implementation of Government scheme, Corruptions, inequality, Negligence of the officials’ exploitation etc. Nearly 50% of the participants were woman from the villages. In Sarpam the leaders represented to the

Government officers to give them Scheduled Tribes Certificate, Street lights, Ration Cards, Drinking Water facility, and land Patta etc.

They have also managed to replicate Sarpam organisation in 18 villages in Uttukottai Taluk of Thiruvallur District Irula, 24 villages in Cuddalore District and 12 villages in Vellore district. Now these leaders have gained the confidence that they can manage to deal with government officers to get their demands granted for their community.

### **Out come:**

#### **Sarpam's leader's role in handling human rights violation issues:**

In Thiruvallur and Vellore district most of the police stations stopped registering false cases against the Irulas on the basis of local landowner's complaints. The Irulas started to protest against this injustice through solidarity among huge membership of Irula villages. This movement made the police to be careful while they register such false cases against Irula community. Sarpam leaders are now more aware of their rights and different laws to deal with them.

However in some cases there are still some police stations in Vellore district which arrest Irulas on false cases. Sarpam and Bharathi Trust personal take up these issues legally and get them released.

### **2. Leadership Training:**

In Thiruvallur, Cuddalore and Vellore District Leaders meeting will be conducted on 25<sup>th</sup> every month. All the leaders will meet and discuss about their newly raised issues and the future course of action that is to be undertaken. The leadership training also gives an opportunity to the participants to bring out their talents, understanding of the community problem.

The leadership training programme at the district level, taluk level, and village level were conducted and the details of which are given below,

### Details of the leadership training programme

Name of District	Name of Taluk	Camp Date	No of participants		Out Reach	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
Thiruvallur	Thiruvallur, Uthukottai, Kumidipoondi, Ponnari, Thirthani, Pallipattu.	09.05.07	10	10	300	400
		04.02.08	08	14	350	400
Vellore	Arkkonam, Kudiyatham, Kattpadi, Thirupathur, Vaniyambadi, Vellore.	05.06.07	25	20	350	475
		17.10.07	20	26	375	420
		31.12.07	18	22	325	350
Cuddalore	Chidambarum Taluk,	02.11.07C	11	9	400	450
		14.08.07	14	10	300	350
		02.01.08	16	20	320	360

#### **Leadership Training In Ponneri Taluk**

As a result of the above mentioned training programs the leaders were able to handle and manage any critical situation on their own. After the training 10 community members meet every week to discuss their problems. The participation certificates were issued. Organising and Uniting Irula people who are at present scattered in different places. The leaders were given continuous input on available laws, qualities of leaders, coping mechanisms for their roles and responsibilities as a leader of Sarpam Sangam. The leaders were trained to manage their Sarpam organisation on the aspects of fund Raising, collection of membership fee, planning and implementation, running the Sangam, accounts maintenance and managerial Skills.

#### **Outcome:**

The leaders of Thiruvallur and Vellore districts are now able to manage their Sarpam Sangam on their own and find out solutions for their problems. We started to work in the Cuddalore

district only after Tsunami the leaders were motivated and trained to tackle the problems and fight for their rights on their own with the Sarpam Guidance.

### **3. Cultural Training:**

Cultural Training is an important tool to reach the community. Sarpam cultural team are given regular training in organising cultural programs these cultural shows help in highlighting the discrimination faced by the Irula community in relation to others and the expertise they should develop to overcome the same.

Every week on Thursday the cultural team undergoes training and new ideas were generated to liberate and sensitise the ignorant Irula in the Newly identified Villages. Apart from this the labourer are given training on the plight of bonded labourers, impact on the released bonded labourers, human rights and abolition of bonded labourer system. Issues regarding the procurement of the Community certificate, Social discriminations faced by the community etc were also focused.

### **4. Public Meeting:**

The purpose of the public meeting comprising of the three districts Cuddalore, Vellore, and Thiruvallur was to highlight the past activities achievements and also apprise them of the assistance they can obtain for redressal of their problem with the help of Bharathi trust and Sarpam. The main object of the meeting was to mobilise the Irulas so that they can get together, unite and represent their grievances

Name of the District	Date	Number of Participants		Out Reach	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Thiruvallur	18.09.07	100	150	300	450

*Public meeting at Thiruvallur district*



### ***Part III -Release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers***

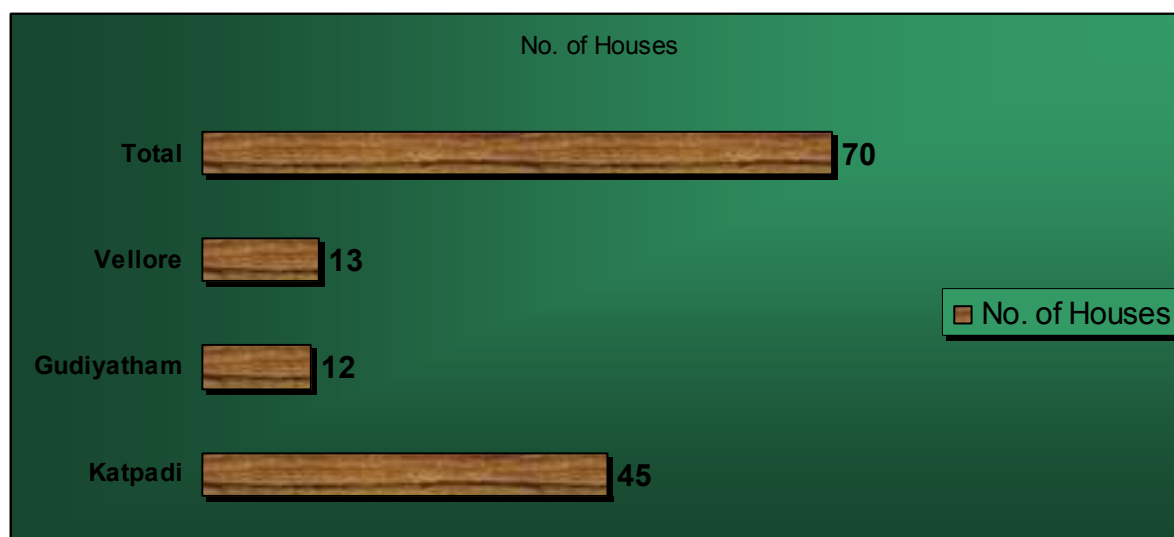
#### **Vellore District:**

The practice of employing bonded labour is still prevalent in certain areas of Vellore and Thiruvallur districts in the Rice mills and Brick kilns. Efforts are being taken to trace them out and get them released. In the district of Vellore 22 bonded labour persons employed in the brick kiln were released due to the intervention of Sarpam on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2008. Release certificates were issued by the R.D.O and other officials.

#### **Brick kiln unit in Vellore**

#### **GROUP HOUSING FOR THE BONDED IRULAS UNDER THE IAY SCHEME:**

A total of 70 free concrete group houses were built for the homeless Irulas particulars are as follows.



***Fig:1- Group Houses constructed at Vellore***

#### **ACHEIVEMENTS**

1. All the rice mills are now registered and obtained license from the government (Earlier not even a single rice mill was registered with the license before this issue has been exposed).
2. The bonded labour working in the rice mill is having regular working hours pursuant to the discussions the R.D.O had with the concern owners.
3. Regular meeting are conducted and discussions carried out between bonded labour and Sarpam project workers.
4. The rice mill owners have written off debts of the release bonded labors.
5. The piece rate has been increased from Rs 8 to Rs 15 per gunny bag of paddy.
6. Less harassment in the rice mills the employees are treated with human dignity.
7. A basic amenity like bore well for drinking water and street lightning was installed.

8. Due to the advice of Sarpam leader's children of bonded labour re compulsorily persuaded to go to schools regularly.

### **Activities performed:**

#### **AWARENESS CAMPS:**

Awareness camps was organised and conducted on 04.07.2007 in Thiruvallur bonded labour Irula villages. We have insisted on the various steps to be taken for relieving the Irulas from the bondages. Steps have also been taken to train them on Labour law, human rights issue, Civil rights and various laws related to women.

### **Outcome;**

The Awareness camp helped us to liberate the people and sensitise them to relieve from the bondages .In Vellore we were able to release three families from the Brick kiln unit. Thiruvallur district people were motivated and acquired the strength to struggle against the bondages levied on them by the owners.

### **CULTURAL MELA**

Cultural Mela was performed to create awareness and to sensitize the people regarding the bonded labour issues. The cultural team has fifteen released bonded labourers comprising 50 % of women involved in campaign work to bring out the bonded labour issue. The programme includes bonded labour issue based songs, Street drama and Role-play. The posters, and pamphlets on Bonded Labour, Laws regarding the wages, SC/ST act was distributed in the villages

The cultural mela is an effective method of reaching the people as 90% of the target people are illiterate. The cultural mela was conducted in Thiruvallur, Vellore, and Cuddalore districts. 10 days mela was conducted in these districts. As the members of the cultural Team belong to Irula scheduled tribe, they were able to reach their community well and convey the ideas in an effective manner. 15 staff members and 15 bonded labourers visited the target villages and organised the cultural melas. This was an extempore event based on their village issues performed by the trained team of 30 members. They highlighted the need for unity among the Irulas, formation of their own Sangams, pathetic situation various government schemes, bonded labour issues etc.

The following are details regarding the cultural Mela,

#### **Cultural Mela**

<i>Sl.No</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Districts</i>	<i>Number of villages performed</i>
01.	27.06.07	Thiruvallur	22 Villages
02.	19.10.07	Cuddalore,	27 Villages
03.	23.03.08	Vellore	15 Villages

**Outcome:**

The Irulas in the targeted villages expressed their willingness to form the Sangam which is the ultimate goal of cultural melas. The people became emotional and offered their donation to the group and the teams were offered food by the villagers. The main focus of the mela was on gender issues, alcoholism, women beating and suppression.

There was a separate cultural mela held on “plight of bonded labourers” and the awareness was created through cultural activities on the condition of how most of the people from Villupuram and Vellore district come to Chennai for the survival purpose and become bonded labourers unknowingly. They shared their experience on their sufferings in the rice mill and Brick kiln to the Irula people. The cultural team is named Viduthalai (Freedom).

**Legal support:**

Sarpam, the People Organisation Legally appeal to the court demanding the rights and rehabilitation of bonded labour. Mrs. Alli (Geetha’s Daughter) And Mr. Chandru have taken up the responsibility for conducting the case.

## ***Tsunami Housing Scheme to Irula in Thiruvallur & Cuddalore Districts***

### **Project goal**

To provide Permanent and Temporary housing for the tsunami-affected Irula community in Cuddalore and Thiruvallur District. To improve the socio-economic status of the tsunami-affected Irula community

### **Project purpose**

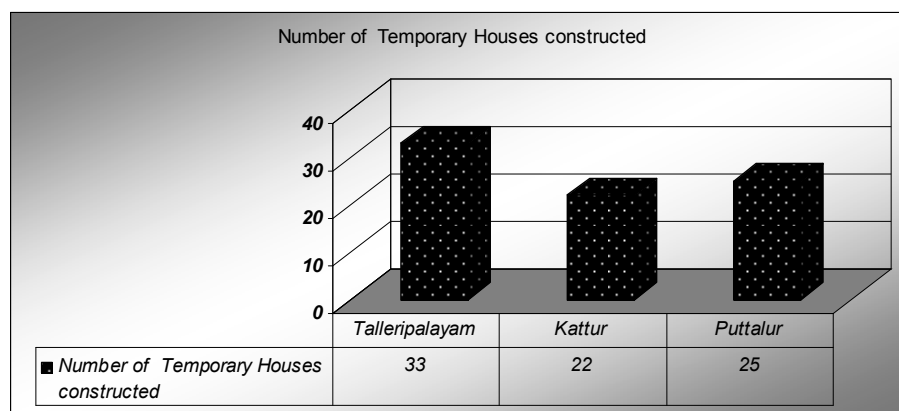
The purpose of the project is rehabilitation of the Tsunami affected Irula community in Cuddalore and Thiruvallur District through the establishment of permanent settlements. The families are now able to lead a more settled life and to avail infrastructural support and social welfare benefits from the state government as an officially recognized community. Permanent settlement and houses reduce the vulnerability of the target community, because target households are enabled to organize themselves more, as well as they will be protected more against environmental hazards by living in permanent houses. Once being settled down permanently, the Irula community can develop alternative and sustainable livelihood opportunities, no longer interrupted by ongoing movements.

### **Construction Activities:**

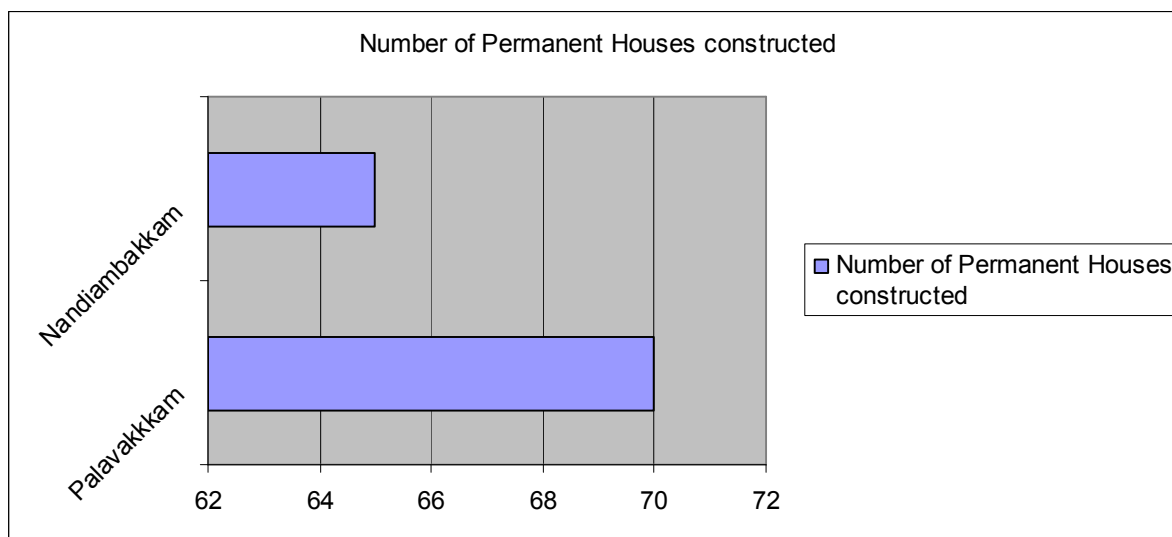
Before taking up the construction of houses in Thiruvallur and Cuddalore district we have made it mandatory to form a committee of community workers in the project area and who decide the purchase of Materials and work force for the housing project.

### **Thiruvallur District**

Bharathi Trust and Sarpam took up the construction project of 215 (Temporary and Permanent) during the year 2007. The construction has been completed. The details are furnished below:



***Fig:2- Temporary Houses constructed in Thiruvallur District***



**Fig:3- Permanent Houses constructed in Thiruvallur District**

S.No	Villages	Construction details
1.	THALLERIPALAYAM	33 Temporary houses were constructed in this village at a cost of Rs.20, 000 each. With Brick, cement and thatched roofing during April 2007.
2.	KATTUR	The construction was taken up during April & 22 Temporary houses were constructed as above.
3.	PUTTALUR	25 Temporary houses were taken up for construction at a cost Rs.20, 000 each, with brick, cement, Thatched roofing.
4.	PALAVAKKAM	Due to labour problems the construction of 70 permanent houses (each 250sq.ft) comprising of a room, kitchen and a toilet with terrace space was delayed but were completed by the end of December 2007.
5.	NANDIAMBAKKAM	A total of 65 permanent houses (each 305sq.ft) was initiated and construction completed by December 2007.

Hence in all 215 houses (permanent and temporary) were built during January to December 2007.

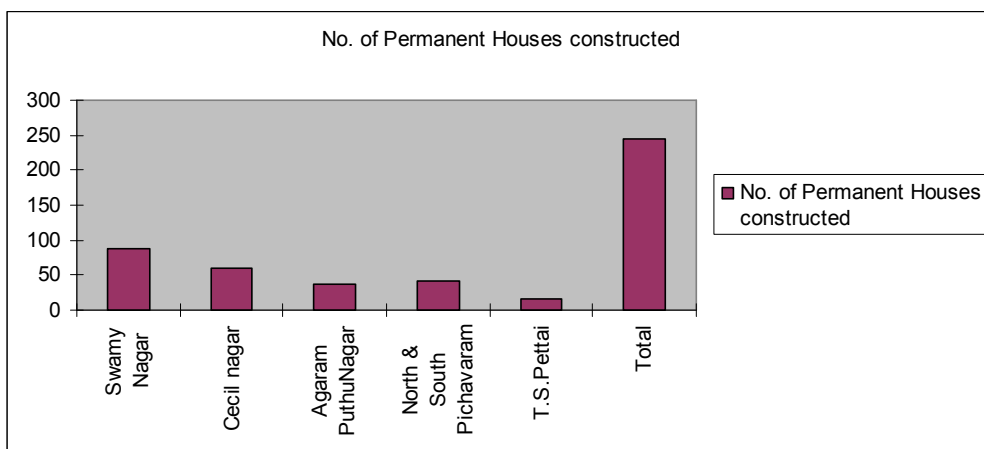
During all stages of construction work periodical supervision by the executives of Action Aid, Managing Trustee of Bharathi Trust and Sarpam Leader was carried out and it was only because of this work could be finished as per the schedule, in spite of adverse circumstances.

*Permanent Houses constructed at Thiruvallur District*

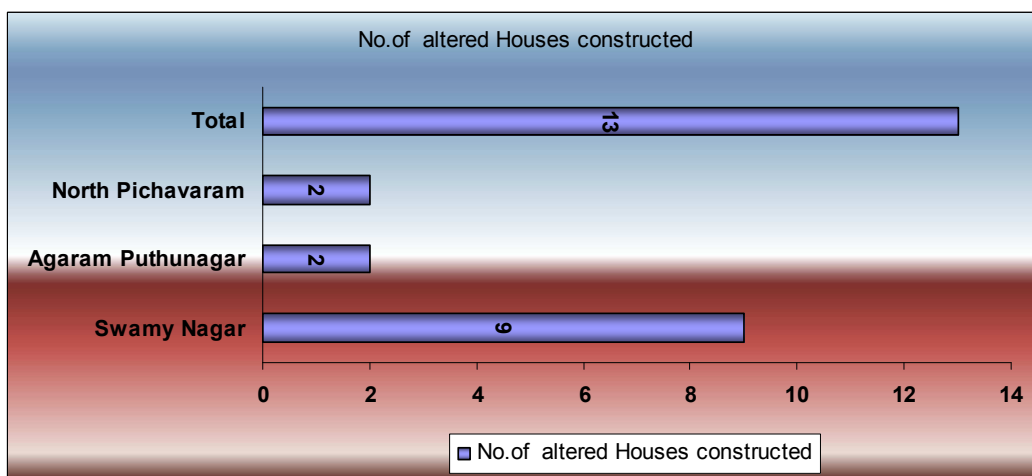


**Cuddalore District**

The housing project for the construction of 257 houses (Permanent and Altered) was taken up during the month of June 2007. The construction could not be completed on the scheduled month of October due to rains. However all the houses have since been completed as on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007.



**Fig:4- Permanent houses constructed in Cuddalore district\***



**Fig:5- Altered houses constructed in Cuddalore district#**

\*The Area of Permanent Houses constructed is – 316sq.ft  
 # The Area of Altered Houses constructed is– 100sq.ft, 150sq.ft, 196sq.ft, 341sq.ft & 800sq.ft

## BHARATHI NAGAR:

97 houses along with basic facilities of water and electric supply connection lines and toilets/ water pumps, as well as semi permanent kitchens outside are constructed. The construction of all 97 houses planned for the phases 1 (57 houses) and 2 (40 houses) of the project is finished. This includes foundation, brick and concrete, roof, plaster, paint, electrification, doors and windows. The beneficiaries of phase 1 and phase 2 have moved into their houses



## Livelihood Project:

### Besant Nagar, Chennai:

The materials to be given to the beneficiaries under this scheme have been ordered and payment effected and the supplies are awaited soon. The details are given below:

1. Vessels required for idly shop.
2. 3 Tri cycles for vending
3. 3 Fish carts
- 4.1 Four wheeler hand cart for food vending.

### Livelihood project at Thiruvallur:

- a) Fiber Boats - 3 Nos. Each fiber boat shared by 7 beneficiaries.
- b) Thoni - 4 Nos. Each Thoni shared by group of 3 persons.
- c) Fishing Nets provided for the users of Fiber boats and Thoni's.

All the beneficiaries were affected by Tsunami and were residents of North Pichavaram, South Pichavaram and Agaram Pudhu Nagar of Chidambaram Taluk.

Fishing nets have been provided to 150 families of Vanjivakkam, Kaanji vayol, Senji amman Nagar, Edakkandigai, Putlur and Indra Nagar.

*Distribution of Fishing Nets at Senji amman Nagar & Putlur Thiruvallur District*

### **Education of Irula children:**

The senior members of Irula community are illiterate and only a very negligible percentage of their children are first generation school goers. Due to their ignorance of basic rights to live with honor, they are always neglected by the society and are also left out of national mainstream by the Government. To make them aware of their basic rights and also socially and financially as viable citizens, they need to be encouraged to acquire the basic knowledge in educational field through constant motivation and involvement. The condition of the children is very poor and they do not possess any knowledge. The society does not provide them the opportunity to learn hence they lack the basic knowledge. Sometimes even after enrolling in the government school they were de-motivated by the teacher's attitude and parent's apathy shown towards their education.

To involve them in education requires motivation and support. Hence basic education has to be provided by the education motivation centre to train them to acquire the basic knowledge for the purpose of getting enrolled in government schools. The basic language and arithmetic skills can be installed in them through the simple techniques. We train the student with twigs, stones and available material in order to attract their attention.

In Addition other activities like Drawing, Painting, clay work, Simple dance steps with rhymes were also included in the curriculum in order to build creativity and interest in learning. We also provide nutritious food to the children to provide stamina and energy. In the centers we also provide nutritious care and health care. These centers also help the working mothers of this community as they can leave their children in the centers and go about their work .Otherwise it will be difficult for them to take the children to their work spot.

The education motivation centre will run for three years and its students will be enrolled in government school in the successive academic year. The children above thirteen years cannot be enrolled in government school hence after training them with needed knowledge we will arrange their learning through correspondence course. The grown up children will be trained in skills according to their preference and needs. Thus, livelihood will also be arranged in future. We are running various Childcare centre and the details are given below.

## **Child Friendly centre Thiruvallur, Vellore and Cuddalore District**

### **Child care centre:**

In panankatteri village, Vellore district the total population of the village is 325. The total number of children studying at present is 50(Boys 26, girls 24). Two teachers Kalai selvi & Kumudha are the staff of the school.

Two child care centers are being run in Nandiambakkam and Senjiaman nagar, Thiruvallur District. Number of students studying in Nandiambakkam is 70 and in Senjiaman Nagar is 40.

The children in Child care center are provided with Nutritious food by Bharathi Trust.

The government authorities have now started now a school in Nandiambakkam village, Thiruvallur district.

### **Financial help given by Bharathi Trust for Higher Education.**

Ms.G.M.Reka of Vellore wanted to pursue higher education in the government college of women at ranipet. As her parents could not offered to pay the fee Bharathi Trust offered to bare the expenses on their representation.

Mr.M.Saravanan project co-ordinator of Bharathi Trust was given financial help to pursue his post graduation studies in law.

### **Child Development centre**

There are 11 child care centre functioning in at present Cuddalore district. The teachers working with these development centers conducted 24 meetings at the Bharathi Trust office during the period from March 2007to April 2008. Mr.Arasu of Action Aid participated in some of these meeting and was kind enough to give his valuable advice on the different aspects of the Training.

The following subjects were discussed:

1. Assessing and improving the talents of the students by the Teachers.
2. Improving the knowledge of the junior students by interaction with the senior cadre
3. Periodical assessment of the knowledge by conducting Test regularly
4. Mutual discussion of the teachers, student carrier guidance holding of special classes during the vacations.
5. Education on the aspects of Hygiene, Health & English knowledge etc.
6. Sports and Participation in the games.
7. Creating Awareness to the parents of the Balwadi children to admit them in the regular schools.
8. Conducting regular sports activities to build up a spirit of competition.
9. Conducting Awareness camps for the parents to persuade children to schools.
10. Informing the parents about various schemes of the government for the students and how to obtain this assistance.

11. Conducting special cultural programs and sports activities on national holidays and award prizes to the winners.
12. Parent, Teacher association meeting are conducted regularly and teachers offering their dedicated efforts to give their best for the improvement of the schools
13. All kinds of educational assistance provided for the students by Bharathi Trust and concern parents have shown their appreciation.
14. Training conducted for the teachers to explain to the students their role and rights towards the society.
15. During the month of November 2007 there were several programs of sports competitions, debates, painting competitions were held and prizes were awarded to the winners.
16. Awareness camps were conducted for parents whose children were dropouts from the school. And 40 of such students were readmitted.

#### **Medical Camp:**

1. Health camps for discovering disabilities like defective vision, back teeth, heart problems and autism and then admit them in near by hospital for necessary treatment.
2. Selva rani of 8<sup>th</sup> standard studying in the Bharathi School M.G.R Nagar had a problem in the eye due to which her vision was affected. Surgery was advised and due to financial help provided by Bharathi Trust vision was restored after the operation.

### **Community Resource center:**

#### **Background:**

India is an agricultural country and 90% of its population is living in the villages. More than 50% of them are illiterates. Though few children from these villages have studied upto school level, they also go for coolie work as their parents are in the condition of grinding poverty and exploitation due to severe unemployment.

Due to modernization, chemical fertilizers and pesticides are being used to increase productivity at the cost of clean environment and good health. Even skilled farmers are unable to follow eco friendly methods of agricultural production. So slowly age old system of our agricultural methods and eco friendly agricultural products are getting vanished. Organic manure production using cow dung and with other decayed vegetable was a very important method of agriculture. Similarly seed recycling also. The present type of agricultural methods and products give not only health problems but environment problems also.

Nowadays plastics are used everywhere and in India it is discarded on the land and is not recycled properly as in the developed countries. This is a very serious eco issue to be tackled immediately. In olden days leaves were used for packing and mud pots were used for storing water.

Water management in India is yet to go a long way. Indian population as a whole is not conserving water. Excess water is used for agriculture if available. Tree planting,

construction of check dam, storing rain water in tanks, rain harvesting, drip irrigation, are some of the water management technique required in India.

Tamilnadu is a rain shadow region and does not get rain during the very popular southwest monsoon, while rest of India is getting plenty of water. For the last three years there was no rain which led to severe drought and starvation deaths. This was due to the fact that there was no livelihood other than agriculture in most of the villages. Bharathi Trust, a social service organization, working at the gross root level in villages and poor tribal people in Tamil Nadu, for the last ten years, has decided to start a community resource center in Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu.

### **Target group:**

The target group or anticipated beneficiaries of the resource center are: Farmers, Women, Students, private as well as government teachers, peasants and artisans, educationists, non-government organizations engaged in various developmental works including education and community at large.

### **The resource center provides the following facilities to the village people:**

1. Indigenous alternate method of income generation and economic development – organic farming, artisan skills in weaving, rainwater harvesting, tailoring and embroidery, pottery, carpentry, bee-keeping, dairy, vermin culture etc.
2. Alternative teaching methods blending the formal and non-formal education methods  
Health & Nutrition – Research and application of traditional methods of herbal medicine and nutrition
3. Documentation & Research – Documenting the activities of the villagers, culture, music, art and history of the communities in the area.
4. Maintain a network of resource persons with similar ideas and skills.
5. Training the community in different skills such as pottery, weaving, tailoring etc.

The community will be involved with the working of the resource centre. They will find employment as artisans and develop their skills. They will also help in the construction of the resource center. The total involvement of the community shall ensure the success of the center.

### **Improvements in the Resource center**

Our project workers in the Resource center have taken up the cause of better cultivation in the land adjoining our land at resource centre by the following methods:

1. Provision of electricity for their agricultural use.
2. Distribution of seeds for cultivation.
3. Advise on the use of organic manure and procedure for preparing the same to them.

It may be mentioned that prior to this step being taken the lands were kept in barren condition.

The following steps were taken at the resource centre for better storage of water for cultivation. Check dams were constructed in various places where the surplus water flowing are channelised and diverted to the pits. Due to this there is a vast improvement in the under ground water table.

The following crops are cultivated at the resource centre:

1. Banana
2. Sunflower
3. Paddy
4. Ground nuts
5. Vegetables

### **A training programme on Nature based organic farming and training methods.**

Training programme on “organic farming” was conducted by Sri K.Nammallvar (Organic scientist) in the Resource centre land belonging to Bharathitrust at Pallipat for benefit of farmers based at Pallipat, Thiruvallur.

The training programme was inaugurated by Mrs. E.Siddamma Managing trustee, Bharathi trust. Advisor Sarpam Sangam and social worker. She informed that the purpose of starting the farm was to train the agriculturist of the area on organic farming. In the usual method of farming most of the agricultural situation mostly chemical fertilizers are used which results in various health problems when they used in the farm products of this sector.

As the cost of the fertilizers is high farmers have to take loans for purchase of the same. In most of the cases the farmers are unable to get less profit, due to reduced production farmers are compelled to committee suicide due to the inability to pay off the loans.

With a measure to obviate such occurrences the organic method of forming is gaining momentum .Bharathi trust have taken up the task of training the farmers through their model farm in Pallipad where training is also imported to the farmers.

Mr.K.Nammallvar explained in simple language that the training will provide knowledge to the farmers for production of non chemical, economical and protective farming methods. He also answered the queries of the farmers.

A cultural programme by the cultural team (Viduthalai Kalai Kulu) of Thiruvallur was also held and the salient point of organic was conveyed through songs and drama.

The co coordinator of Bharathi trust resource centre Mr.Theni V.Shanmugavel explained by visual aids about the preparation of natural manure by earthworm (vermicompost) and other composting methods.

The farmers attended the meeting appreciated the training programme and assured that they have also been motivated to follow methods in their lands.

## ***Fire Accident Relief in Bharathi Nagar***

### **1. Objectives of the Project**

The objective of the project was to rehabilitate the Delivering basic relief items for the people of Bharathi Nagar affected by the fire accident on 25.09.2007 through the provision of basic relief and livelihood support and the distribution of household items, clothes.

### **2. Current Situation in Bharathi Nagar:**

After the distribution of relief items and the finalization of the construction of their new houses, the living condition of the affected people has strongly improved. They have fully recovered from the incident.

### **3. Description of Project**

#### **a. Initial relief stage**

Directly after the fire incident, Bharathi Trust assessed the damage and organized immediate relief support by providing food items. It was agreed to provide tarpaulin shelters instead of thatched huts for the affected people.

On 26.09.2007, a community meeting was held which discussed the following items:

- Shelter, food and clothing
- Cooking vessels, blankets and mats
- Milk for the children
- Study materials, note books, etc.
- Livelihood items (fishing nets, one sound system, building materials, etc.)
- Compensation for the materials destroyed in the accident.

#### **b. Items Distributed to the Fire Accident Victims by Bharathi Trust**

The following relief items were distributed:

- 58 sets of household utilities are distributed
- 58 sets of basic food and hygiene items are distributed

- Sets of clothing for 53 women, 56 men, 43 girls and 46 boys are distributed
- The livelihoods of the community are re-established
- Temporary shelters are built with the support of a kitchen provided by Malteser
- Stationery items for school children are distributed
- 58 bed sheets are distributed

On 07.10.2007 a function was organized and the District Collector in the chair. It was organized with the view to provide livelihood items like cooking vessels etc given by Malteser International to the 58 affected families. One school bag was distributed to each of the school going children on behalf of the BDO (Block Development Officer)

### **Livelihood Support for Victims of Fire Accident:**

The following items were provided by Bharathi Trust as a measure of Livelihood restoration to the fire victims.

- i. Sound System
- ii. Petty shop
- iii. Tiffin Center
- iv. Goat
- v. Masonry Kits
- vi. Cycle
- vii. Tailoring Machine

### **Flood Relief:**

Due to unprecedented rains during the month of October there was heavy flooding of water in Cuddalore district. The following places were badly affected and relief had to be provided.

1. Savartha medu
2. Sivayam
3. Aalambadi
4. Kumaratchi
5. Palayamkotai
6. Thevanaputhu
7. M.Parur
8. Thenpadhi
9. Radha Nallur
10. Palayam jayanthagudi

Dry rations like rice, chilies, pulses, spices etc were provided as a immediate relief.

## Significant Events 2007-2008

### *The Hurricane Katrina-Tsunami Exposure Trip*

It difficult to relate to disasters in the next city or state, let alone a country far out in the west. Yet the importance to learn from the other, the one across the border or across oceans is none the less great. The December 2004 tsunami unleashed horrific loss and destruction in 12 countries of Africa and Asia. In August 2005, on the other side of the world, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf region, leaving behind tremendous damage and rendering thousands of people homeless.

To examine these similarities and share cross-learnings, ActionAid US in collaboration with ActionAid India's International Emergencies and Conflict Team and the National Tsunami Response Program Team, designed an exchange program that brought together 20 activists, grass-root workers and people who faced the fierce winds of hurricane Katrina and the giant waves of the tsunami. The visit was supported by Mott Foundation in USA.

In May 2007, a ten member delegation arrived from the US to begin the first half of the exposure visit in India. Some of these delegates comprised of survivors of the hurricane and belonged to the African American communities from New Orleans and Mississippi who faced the brunt of discrimination and denial of rights by the US Government. They visited around 15 coastal villages of Puducherry, Cuddlore and Nagapattinam and shared their stories of discrimination with the equally marginalized dalit and tribal communities who were affected by the tsunami, along with NGOs and Social activists involved in the tsunami reconstruction process

*Ten member delegations arrived from the US visiting Tsunami Affected villages in Cuddalore*



The second half of the exchange a team of Indian activists and grass-root workers visited Hurricane Katrina affected areas in New Orleans, Louisiana and Biloxi, Mississippi in August 2007. The Indian delegation met with habitants of the Public Housing structures, the Vietnamese community in New Orleans, Grass-root organizations such as Hope House, Common Ground, etc. government officials involved in the reconstruction processes and many other activists working towards the rebuilding process in the post Katrina scenario. The group also had the opportunity to participate in the second commemoration of Hurricane Katrina on August 30, 2007.

*Indian delegation Siddamma in New Orleans survivors of the hurricane Katrina on August 30, 2007*



These cross learning has brought to light that no matter where a disaster strikes, its aftermath and impact affect all in the same way...loss of loved ones, families and homes destroyed, livelihoods ruined and life as we know it coming to a halt.

The Indian participants:

- Siddamma from Bharathi Trust works with the Irulas, an Adivasi community who were initially forest dwellers.
- Shibhu from CWBC who works largely with workers from the unorganized labour sector
- Alex Tuscano from Praxis, an organization that works with the fishing community in KannyaKumari
- Nicholas from Dalit Mannurimai Kuttamaippu, Puducherry
- Thomas Peter from the Fish Workers Association in Kerala
- Amar Jyoti Nayak ActionAid International India
- Michelle Baxter ActionAid International India and

***Visit to Seattle, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, CNJ, NYC.***

Mrs.Siddamma who was visiting the US to attend a conference on Tsunami and Katrina took time out to talk to Asha Volunteers across the country. Siddamma, an Asha Fellow and a grassroots activist who has extensively worked with the Irula tribal communities and has been instrumental in the release of over 2000 bonded laborers from the rice mills in Red Hills near Chennai, shared her experience with a group of eager Asha Volunteers in New York. Siddamma who has been conferred several awards and honors in the past few years including "Heroes Acting To End Modern-Day Slavery", has also been invited by many government agencies from several countries to share her experience. She has also addressed the UN as part of the presentation on "Tsunami Response: A human Rights Assessment

Mrs.Siddamma has worked extensively to organize the Irula community to represent themselves and their rights and in the process has rehabilitated the adults by re-skilling them while ensuring that the children of these families get mainstream schooling as well. Her experience in re-skilling and re-employing The freed labourers is an example of how free communities work and can easily fit into class room Economics.

Some policies are bad for land – pesticides etc introduced in name of Green Revolution (urea,nitrates etc) are harming the land – more production is needed- is the argument of Green Revolution – but even if the food quantity has been increased the amount of poverty has not – chemicals used in bad for land and bad for health. Hence Bharathi Trust has created model agricultural lands and cultivation is done as per the traditional Indian farming main thing needed is a cow – no money needed for anything else. Leaves and cow dung is sufficient – Rs 2000 and 2 cows per family in this model villages – 6 families leave here - 13 acres of land – rainwater harvesting done here –food made for local consumption – lot of crops that the Govt is not encouraging in India are grown. She explained about the Low cost Houses schemes which are constructed for the Tsunami Affected Irula villages in TamilNadu Coastal Areas.

*Photos of her visit to US at Boston, Seattle and Chicago*

