

Issue 65 June 2021
SALT OF THE EARTH
Registered Charity 328328
www.sote.org.uk
Patron: Jeremy Irons



salt**seller**

COVID-19 EDITION



WE LAUNCH ANOTHER COVID-19 APPEAL

We had hoped that the rural villages we support would not need any more extra assistance but, as you know, a deadly second wave of Covid 19 infection is currently sweeping India.

This time the village infection levels are much worse than last year, levels are still rising and are not expected to peak before the end of May. As a result, Tamil Nadu is now in total lockdown.

We launched our second appeal by email on 28th April and, once again, we have had a rapid and generous response from our supporters.

At the time of writing, we have just reached £30,000 but it is apparent from reports from our partner organisations that more will be needed to help protect, feed, and support the most vulnerable.

For those of you for whom we do not hold email addresses this will be the first notification of the appeal and we hope that you will feel able to help.

We also ask that you pass on our

appeal to anyone of you know.

We can assure you that every penny donated will be sent direct to India without any deductions.

Please send your donation by Bank Transfer to:

Salt of the Earth
CAF Cash account number: 00007729,
Sort Code: 40-52-40
Quote: "Emergency relief"

Cheques can be sent directly to our Treasurer, Dave Bradly, at
54 Ashleigh Road, Leicester, LE3 0FB.

You can also donate on our website. Click on the COVID-19 appeal 'donate' button on the website homepage and donate through the CAF link provided: <https://www.sote.org.uk/>

THE SITUATION IN THE VILLAGES

This second wave of Covid infection in the villages is much more serious and contagious. Infections are widespread and increasing daily. Experts are saying that the anticipated peak is still weeks away.

The meagre public health services are overwhelmed, the hospitals are full and, in any case, are chronically short of oxygen and medicines. All our three partner organisations report Covid infections amongst their field staff.

"This second wave of Covid infection is much more serious and contagious."

The central government had promised vaccinations for all over the age of 18 but these plans have not materialised due to a severe shortage of vaccines. None of the rural poor in the villages we support have had a vaccination and are not likely to for some considerable time.

Tamil Nadu moved from a partial lockdown to full lockdown on Monday 10th May for an initial period of two weeks. As the infection rate is still rising most expect it to be extended until the end of the month at the very least. All non-essential shops are shut, and food shops have restricted hours. All public transport has stopped and the use of private and hire vehicles is restricted.

The population were given 48 hours' notice of the lockdown and so they were able to buy in provisions and other essential goods, provided they had the money to do so. The state government has promised some basic financial and food help to all families registered as being below poverty level. There are however a significant number of eligible people who are not registered, often due to illiteracy.

Unemployment due to the lockdown is rising and the absence of savings will force many families into the hands of the rapacious local money lenders.

Our three partner organisations are working hard in the villages to mitigate the effects of the pandemic for those most in need thanks to the funding we are providing from the appeal. Here are some details.

CRUSADE staff have identified 1900 people among the Women's Self Help Groups, elderly and disabled who are particularly at risk and are supplying each of them with food packs. They are also distributing government approved homeopathic remedies to help prevent and reduce the severity of infection.

Field staff previously reliant on public transport have been transferred to other duties. Infections are rising.

MASARD are also reporting that Infections are rising and now they are concentrating their efforts on dis-

"None of the rural poor in the villages we support have had a vaccination and are not likely to for some considerable time"

tributing thousands of masks. They have purchased PPE equipment for their staff and have provided emergency medical supplies for each of the 15 villages. Financial help is being given to the destitute and grocery packs are being prepared for distribution which will be needed soon due to unemployment.

CARE, who support the London begging community of four villages, report that, due to the lockdown restrictions, the villagers' income has immediately ceased. Family food packs are therefore being provided. In the absence of any local medical services, basic medical equipment such as thermometers and oximeters have been purchased as infection levels are reported as high and rising.

Murray Frankland
Founding and Managing Trustee

ACHIEVEMENTS OCT 2020 - MARCH 2021



CRUSADE oversee 390 Women's Self Help Groups with a total of 5623 members. In Dec 2020, the total savings of 310 groups was Rs 7.85 crores (£800,000). An impressive average of 2.53 lakh (£2,600) per group. The group savings enable women to borrow funds for education, building homes, and starting small businesses.

Rural women are at a high risk of sexual abuse, domestic abuse and gender-based violence. **MASARD's** Women's Refuge Centre saw an average of 10-15 women per month for overnight respite, and 25-30 for daily support with social workers.

CARE report that alcohol consumption has lowered among women in the begging communities with the support of **CARE's** social workers.



EDUCATION

In the absence of education, MASARD & CARE provided lessons and mid-day meals to children aged 4-16 throughout the first wave of Covid. Appointed teachers taught over 120 sponsored children, as well as hundreds of other children in each village, using donations from our first humanitarian appeal.

As well as educating children, we funded training days and workshops for the adults of rural poor communities. CRUSADE organised two batches of tailoring training, which is now helping to provide a source of income for participants. They also provided training regarding medicinal herb cultivation and provided saplings to the Self Help Group members who took part.

CARE trained local villagers in goat rearing, ahead of their goat rearing project planned to begin later in 2021.



COUNSELLING

Priyanka, a professionally trained therapist, has continued to provide child and family counselling services two days a week at MASARD's Rural Development Centre. On her visits, Priyanka offers individual counselling sessions, as well as group meditation and therapy classes.

Clients are referred by MASARD's field staff and animators and are supported in sessions for several weeks, depending on the situation. People having difficulties coping with their marriage, anxieties, fears, and family challenges, are offered a place to feel supported and listened to.



HEALTH

CRUSADE organised 77 mobile health clinics, treating 2900 patients. Of the patients, 243 (8.3%) had acute diseases such as cough, headache, and tonsillitis, and 2657 (91.6%) had chronic ailments such as skin infections, arthritis and asthma.

In hypertension and diabetes screening camps, 2729 villagers were screened for hypertension and 326 for diabetes. Of those screened, 926 were identified as having hypertension and 66 were identified to have diabetes. The patients have been given counselling on diet and lifestyle and have regular check-ups.

In conjunction with Penn Nalam Hospital, 194 women were screened for cervical and breast cancer, 31 of whom were advised for further referrals.



FOOD AID

Using donations from our 2020 appeal, we were able to continue to provide cooked meals and grocery kits to thousands of rural poor families across Tamil Nadu. Dry grocery kits containing pulses, grains, spices and rice helped to feed individual families for a month, and meals cooked in community kitchens helped to save the rural poor from starvation.

With shops situated miles away and transport closed, food aid provided nutrition at a time when obtaining necessities was almost impossible.

SUPPORT DURING THE FIRST WAVE OF COVID-19: Case studies from Tamil Nadu

CRUSADE

Protesting for water in Sengazhuneermedu village

The Gayathri Amman Women's Self Help Group (WSHG) in Sengazhuneermedu village has 12 members. The village is located in Voyalr district and is comprised of 13 hamlets. All hamlets have water supplied to them by overhead tanks that are overseen by the local Panchayat.

In March 2021, a botched repair of the main motor pump caused the hamlets to be without water. The local Panchayat president organised water tankers to be sent to 12 of the 13 hamlets. However, Sengazhuneermedu village was sidelined and was left without water.

Furious with the injustice, all 12 WSHG members protested outside the Panchayat office with empty water pots. Photos of the protest were sent to the Panchayat president, who immediately advised the women to end the campaign and promised them that water would be supplied in the evening. The promise was honoured, and water was sent to Sengazhuneermedu village that very evening.



Setting up a small business

Sasikala, aged 28, is a member of Ponniamman Women's Self Help Group (WSHG) in Thinaipakkam village. Her husband, Dayalan, aged 42, lost his job during the pandemic. The family have two children, aged 8 and 2, and suffered without adequate income.

Through the support of her WSHG, the couple were able to obtain a loan of Rs. 50,000 from the bank. They purchased an old four-wheel cycle and cooking equipment, and set up a Pani Pooiri business on the side of the road selling snacks made of wheat stuffed with potato. They spend around Rs. 800 a day on ingredients and generate a net income of Rs. 1200 by selling the snacks for Rs. 2000.

Now, the couple can support their family and are thankful that they were supported by CRUSADE whilst applying for their loan. Sasikala is also grateful to her WSHG for giving her the confidence to set up the business during a difficult time.



Helping a patient get back on his feet

Mr. Munusamy, aged 55, lives with his wife and son's family in Devadhanam village, Minjur. Due to a locomotor disability, he is unable to find employment and instead rears cattle and sells milk.

During the lockdown of August 2020, Mr. Munusamy injured his right foot on a sharp pointed stone. Walking became incredibly painful and altered his gait. Home remedies proved unsuccessful, and the injury turned into an open ulcer that made walking unbearable. He was hesitant to visit the hospital fearing the Covid virus and expensive hospitalisation costs.

When CRUSADE's doctor visited his village during a mobile clinic funded by SOTE's health intervention project, Mr. Munusamy was relieved. Dr. Vasanth taught him how to clean and dress his wound and prescribed him with homoeopathic remedies. After taking the medicines and tending to his injury, Mr. Munusamy was able to walk again and resume his dairy business.

"Now, the couple can support their family and are thankful that they were supported by CRUSADE whilst applying for their loan"

MASARD

Empowering young women

When rural women finish school, their freedom can become restricted. Once they are married, they often face a disproportionate burden of domestic work as they move into their spouse's home and take care of the children and elderly family members. Access to a phone or contact with people outside the household is limited.

Our social workers came across many young women experiencing depression and home-based challenges during the pandemic. To empower them, MASARD organised workshops based on suggestions from the young women themselves. Workshops included sanitary hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, Preventing pregnancy with contraceptives, and safe use of the internet. MASARD also organised skills training in beauty treatments, cooking, and mehndi and henna design.

The sexual and reproductive health, and sanitary hygiene classes run by Prof. Gayathri (director of Psychology Institute of Krishnagiri) were most well received. Attendees reported that they felt a great sense of freedom and relief as taboos surrounding these topics were shattered.

Several young women are now earning income following skills training workshops. Sahitya Kumari from Addakurki is now earning over Rs. 10,000/- (£100) per month by helping brides with mehndi and henna. Yeshoda from TMG Kote is earning an average of Rs. 700/- per month providing beauty treatments.



CARE

Alternatives to begging in the Londor community

Ms. Bavani - Ozahlur begging community

Ms. Bavani, aged 20, and her 3-year-old child would regularly beg on roadsides and outside local temples. Her husband would often force her to beg, in order to fund his alcohol addiction.

Ms. Bavani is a member of her local Women's Self Help Group and was frequently encouraged by CARE to think about an alternative source of income.

After some encouragement, Ms. Bavani came up with a solution. She approached CARE support workers with ideas on starting a food stall. CARE helped her buy a batch of coconuts to sell outside the local temple.

Now Ms. Bavani has developed skills in talking to customers and is proud that she no longer needs to make herself look dirty to generate an income. She keeps herself clean and smiles at work every day. She feels proud of her development and is continuing to do well.

Ms. Kamatchi - Vallipuram begging community

Ms. Kamatchi, aged 25, has two children. She and her husband have begged as a source of income for many years. The Londor community struggle to find employment, as they are often shunned by society.

Previously, Ms. Kamatchi has struggled with alcohol addiction. Although begging can generate income, it can also be very dangerous. After seeing the success of Ms. Bavani's coconut stall, she approached CARE with requests for support.

CARE provided Ms. Kamatchi with a batch of coconuts and she has since been selling them successfully outside her local temple. Devotees offer coconuts to the gods and crowd the temples three days a week. At the beginning, she found the change of lifestyle challenging. Now, she is finding the work much more exciting, has overcome her alcohol addiction, and is being regularly monitored and supported by CARE social workers.

HOW WE IMPLEMENT SUPPORT & AID

SOTE approve project applications

Partner CEOs

Employed by NGOs to oversee projects

Professional social / support workers oversee the implementation of SOTE projects and aid. They oversee counselling services, organise health programmes, awareness campaigns and organise livelihood and training interventions. They are responsible for reporting on projects and sponsorship schemes and inform field social workers about available resources / aid for the districts.

Field Social workers

Employed by NGOs to represent district and support local village animators

Social workers oversee the bookkeeping of all Self Help Groups in their district and help to set up new groups. They support animators in obtaining available resources and organise mobile clinics, cancer camps, and village interventions. Coordinators organise aid and interventions and ensure each village is accounted for.

Village Animators

Local members of the community employed part-time to represent their respective village

Animators act as the bridge between their village and SOTE resources. They help to motivate villagers with incentives and identify those most at need of support. These well-respected members of the community directly distribute aid, resources, and information within their own villages.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENTS DESPITE CHALLENGES

The cost to plant a tree

The average cost of planting a tree has been steadily rising since we last reviewed it four years ago.

Inflation runs at over 10% in India and on top of that we are now having to provide tree guards for the growing number of trees that are being planted on common land. Without protection, the saplings would have little chance of survival from hungry goats and other animals.

All this means that the average cost of planting a tree has now risen to £2.

Despite the pandemic restrictions, our partners have demonstrated great commitment to our environmental schemes and are continuing to implement practical incentives to help reduce the effects of climate change in the local area.

Tree planting

MASARD have worked incredibly hard to plant over 10,000 trees on public roads, within school compounds, and outside homes in the 15 villages they support. Furthermore, CRUSADE distributed 1,700 saplings to total a combined effort of over 11,000 trees in 2020. We think this is a remarkable achievement in the circumstances.

Tree guards

With the need for tree guards increasing, MASARD have developed a cost-effective solution using local resources. The team purchase pre-used wooden poles from farmers and employ a local welder to create steel rings to form a circular structure. The same mesh that is used for protecting kitchen gardens is then wrapped around the structure to create a layer of protection for young saplings. Their creation costs around Rs. 250/- (£2.50) per tree guard, as opposed to

the local price of 2500/- to Rs. 5000 (£25-£50) from local wholesalers.

Vegetable seed distribution

CRUSADE field staff and health workers have worked extremely hard to match the success of last year's vegetable seed distribution. In total, 15kg of vegetable seeds were organ



CRUSADE CEO, Jothi (back) with animators (left) & coordinator M.Kumari (right) organising seeds

ised into 5-10g bags and distributed to Self Help Group members to be planted outside homes before the onset of the monsoon. The seeds included beans, eggplant, pumpkin, okra, bitter melons and calabash melon.

The village animators organising the seed packets have enthusiastically participated in this year's distribution work and have enjoyed having a sense of purpose throughout unsettling times.



Tree planted at Patakotte school - 2 year progress

Kitchen gardens

Our partners have continued to provide guidance and support to existing participants throughout lockdown and have also helped to set up new gardens for eager families and Self Help Group members. Small spaces outside homes have been flourishing with trees, fruits, vegetables, and medicinal herbs.



Trees planted on Annanagar public road - 1 year progress

"Kitchen gardens were a means of survival during the shutdown of shops and transport"

What started as a means for families to grow their own vegetables and utilise wastewater quickly became a means of survival during the shutdown of shops and transport. Kitchen gardens provided a lifeline to participants at a time when obtaining necessities was almost impossible.

Organic grow bags

Throughout 2020, CRUSADE distributed 140 organic grow bags to families. The plants were cultivated at CRUSADE's compound and distributed to families to be grown on rooftops and patios. As the seeds come with soil and a grow bag, the incentive has proven popular among families who have limited outdoor space at home. The bags were distributed under socially distanced measures and were well received by participants.

Medicinal plants

CRUSADE trained 586 local Self Help Group members in the cultivation of herbal plants and distributed 1606 herbal saplings between participants. Natural remedies are widely accepted across Tamil Nadu and can be used to care for minor ailments such as coughs, fevers, skin rashes, stomach issues as well as burns and allergies. These plants were also grown at CRUSADE's organic compound, and have been growing steadily since distribution.

A message from our partners

Reflecting on the past year, Jothi Ramalingham states:

"The year 2020 has been unique in terms of adversity and challenges. Although we could not visit all the plots, tree planting participants' feedback has been uniformly positive. The benefits of growing vegetables and fruits in gardens was widely recognised during the months of lockdown."

When asked what hopes he has for the future, John Fernandes, MASARD CEO, expresses:

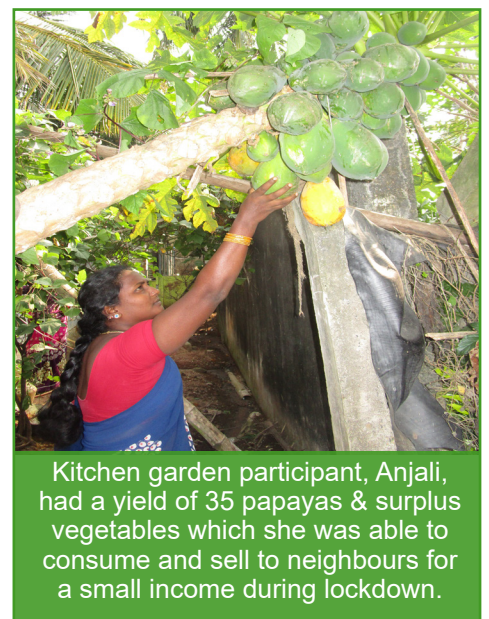


Social worker, Elizabeth (left) with kitchen participant Kala

"Our hopes for the future are that we can build our own water tank to save money on dry days. We would love to develop a small nursery and grow our own saplings and are planning ways to become more sustainable."

We are incredibly happy and thankful to SOTE for the opportunity to contribute to our Mother Planet and the local villagers and children have shown great passion throughout 2020."

MASARD and CRUSADE have continued to demonstrate great commitment to helping to improve the environment and the lives of the local people. We are delighted to call them partners.



Kitchen garden participant, Anjali, had a yield of 35 papayas & surplus vegetables which she was able to consume and sell to neighbours for a small income during lockdown.

GIVE A GIFT

Newborn Baby and Mother Package - £22.50

Gift contains a baby mosquito net, a cotton towel, dress, nappies, paracetamol drops, iron drops, sanitary products, iron tonic and a health mix drink.

Small Smart Cooking Stove for a Family - £22.50

Donate an environmentally sound cooking stove.

The Gift of Sight - £12.50

Donate an eye test, cataract referral and glasses.

The Gift of Trees - £10.00

Plant 5 trees to help protect the environment and increase nutritional security.

Medical Check for an Elder - £15.00

Pay for an elder to have a full medical check up and receive a thick blanket for the monsoon.

Water Sawyer Filtration Kit - £25.00

Donate a water filter kit to provide clean water

BECOME A SPONSOR

SPONSOR A CHILD: £18 a month

Our child sponsorship scheme aims to educate and enable children to break out from the existing cycle of poverty, ill health and underachievement. Your donations support the development of a child, their families, and help to fund wider village community projects such as mobile health clinics, skills training, and livelihood incentives.

SPONSOR A VILLAGE: £1,500 per annum

Our village sponsorship scheme provides mid to long term assistance to deprived rural villages with a population of 2,000 to 4,000 people. The villages are identified by our partners as some of Tamil Nadu's poorest communities. Donations enable SOTE's core interventions, as well as specialised support.

PLANT TREES: for £2 a tree

SOTE have successfully planted over 350,000 trees in rural Tamil Nadu. Trees and kitchen gardens provide food, shade, income and herbal remedies to rural poor families and also help to mitigate the effects of climate change on the local area. Offset your carbon footprint with a one-off donation, or help us continue our environmental support by becoming a tree planting sponsor. **Visit www.sote.org.uk for more info**



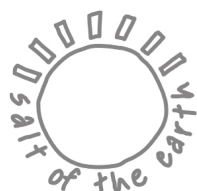
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A MESSAGE FROM OUR TREASURER

As treasurer, I would like to encourage supporters to transfer money via online Bank Transfer (BACS) when sending money to Salt of the Earth.

Transferring via BACS ensures that the full value of your donation gets paid directly into our account, with no fees deducted by the banks. Online donations on our website and using a credit card are subject to a 3% fee.

However, as many of you have experienced, a recent change in the banking system called 'Confirmation of Payee Directive', means that your bank is unable to automatically confirm that the bank account details you have entered, actually belong to Salt of the Earth. This is because CAF bank (our charity bank) is not, and have no definite plans to be, adherents to this scheme.

So, when you first set up the transfer to us and receive messages in the form of: "We cannot confirm the details you entered because the bank or account you want to pay isn't part of the payee checking service", please proceed with the donation. Please proceed only after you have double checked that you HAVE entered our account details correctly.

If you wish for confirmation of your transfer, please email me: treasurer@salt-of-the-earth.org.uk. You should not receive the same message on a subsequent donation as your bank will remember the details you entered before.

Our account details are:

CAF Bank; Salt of the Earth;
Account No: 00007729
Sort Code: 40-52-40

LEAVE A LEGACY

Would you like to continue to support the rural poor in Tamil Nadu after you have gone? You can do this by naming Salt of the Earth charity in your will and specifying a sum (pecuniary legacy) or a percentage of your estate (residuary).

Any legacy to the charity will be free of inheritance tax and the amount will be subtracted from the net value of your estate before any tax liability is calculated. If you have already made a will and would like to add a legacy to our charity, then this can be done by making a codicil to your existing will. It is a simple process that your solicitor can help you with if required. *Thank you*

SALT OF THE EARTH - Registered Charity 328328

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