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SALT OF THE EARTH
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News from South India



OUR SECOND COVID EMERGENCY APPEAL

Thanks to your great generosity our second Covid Emergency appeal launched in April **raised a magnificent £38,374**. This second Covid wave peaked in July, was highly infectious and it struck the villages much harder than the first one. Another lockdown was implemented which affected employment badly and schools remained closed.

It is hard for us to imagine what life is like for many of the rural poor who live in the villages that we support. At the best of times many of them live a precarious and uncertain day to day life. They were therefore unprepared for and unable to cope with the financial and other issues brought about by the two lockdowns as well as the realities of the illness itself. Most of them are daily paid labourers and overnight found themselves unemployed. In these circumstances the aid that we were able to fund, because of your generosity, was literally lifesaving for thousands of families.

The largest part of the money has been spent on providing basic food parcels for 4,000 families and 15,000 midday meals for children to replace the ones they would have received had schools been open. Other money has gone to providing much needed Covid awareness programmes and front line medical support and diagnosis. Great efforts have also been made to provide a degree of educational support for school age children to compensate for the total shut down of all schools for the last 18 months.

At this stage I must pay tribute to the field staff of our three partner organisations. At CRUSADE, MASARD and CARE the field staff have put themselves on the line to bring help and support to the villages where they work. Despite the protective clothing that our funding was able to provide some were infected and one staff member died. Throughout this emergency they have worked tirelessly and effectively and deserve our thanks and admiration.

At the time of writing infections are at a low level, most restrictions have been lifted and schools are due to re-open in November. The Indian government's hugely ambitious vaccination programme is now in full swing but will have to improve if the target of every adult having been vaccinated by the end of the year is to be met. Some experts think there will be a third wave, but others disagree. Let us hope that the optimists prevail.

I do hope I have been able to portray the impact and importance of the aid money that you have so generously donated. It has truly made a huge difference to many thousands of people and, **we can confidently say, it has saved lives**. On page two there is more information and case studies showing, in a way that I have found very moving, much of what has been achieved.

With thanks,
Founding and managing Trustee

COVID SPENDING & CASE STUDIES

CARE

CARE is the smallest partner but works with the most disadvantaged people, namely the Landor begging community. These largely illiterate people were unable to leave their homes because of the lockdown restrictions and were overnight penniless. They are not recognised by the government and so were unable to qualify for food and financial relief.

The community was badly hit by the virus with 50% of the population being infected with four fatalities. The food parcels that CARE were able to distribute saved many families from starvation. In the absence of any local medical facilities, medical kits were provided by field staff to monitor temperatures, oxygen levels and blood pressure. CARE staff also provided tuition classes for the school children to offset the closure of all schools.



Valli and her family

Valli, aged 35 and her husband have four children and live in a simple tent on the outskirts of Manapakkam village. In July she and her husband caught Covid badly and were hospitalised for several weeks. The family were not eligible for any government support and so were in dire straits.

During this desperate time CARE staff, with our funding, ensured that the children were cared for and fed. This help was continued for several months after the parents were discharged as they were both still very weak and unable to work.

The family are most grateful for the help which enabled them to survive in their time of great need.

MASARD

Most of MASARD's relief work was administered by the part time workers (Animators) in each of the 15 villages where they work. These Animators were provided with top quality PPE equipment and a basic medical kit which enabled them to give immediate medical assistance to Covid sufferers. They also arranged for severe cases to be taken to hospital in one of their existing vehicles converted into an ambulance. This proved to be a lifesaver for patients from some of the outlying villages.

1000 grocery kits with enough food for a family of five for 45 days were provided to those families most in need. In addition, 15,000 lunches were cooked for school age children in lieu of the midday meal they were missing because of the school closures. This scheme ran in tandem with an out of school education programme which students had to attend to qualify for getting a meal.

Shanta and her family

During the pandemic her husband was unable to work in order to provide for Shanta and their three small children because of an injury. Shanta desperately tried to get work to earn money but was unable to do so.

The family was not eligible for any government assistance, so Shanta was reduced to scavenging leftover tomatoes and other spoiled vegetable crops from nearby farms.

On discovering her plight MASARD staff provided food and support for the family for 45 days until her husband was able to resume work.



The main thrust of CRUSADE's relief efforts was to provide grocery parcels to over 2,600 families who were most in need. This group mainly comprised the differently abled, widowed women and the poorest members of the many Women's Self Help Groups. CRUSADE's medical team also provided 5,500 homoeopathic doses of a remedy that was recommended by the Tamil Nadu government to protect against infection.

CRUSADE's founding treasurer S.K. Jayachandram contracted the virus in early September and sadly died at the age of 60. This has been a shattering blow to all the staff.

Gunammel, a widow

Gunammel is a 68 year old widow. Her only son is married and has left her village. Before lockdown her only sources of income were a small widow's pension (£10 per month) and part time employment in a government scheme. This is what happened to her in her own words.

"At the peak of the pandemic I did not receive my pension payments or state organised employment. When this happened CRUSADE provided me with essentials such as rice, pulses, cooking oil, Jaggerry (sugar), wheat flour and chick pea. No one else came to help us during this time and I am very grateful to CRUSADE".



SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: New collaboration

In Tamil Nadu, people with disabilities are some of the poorest and most socially excluded members of rural communities. Although state support may be available, there is a lack of awareness regarding its benefits. Some people living with disabilities are unable to complete applications for such support, due to illiteracy and the complicated bureaucratic process involved.

As a result, a person living with a disability in rural Tamil Nadu is likely to be affected by poor health, low educational achievements, poor employment prospects, low income, high rates of poverty and increased dependency.

CRUSADE has a long-standing history of supporting people with disabilities. Its main activity has been to set up People with Disability Groups (PWDGs). These groups run on the same lines as Women's Self Help Groups but are also open to unmarried women and men. The groups particularly address issues relating to its members such as accessing government services and benefits, getting employment, and accessing

health treatments. PWDGs are closely supported by CRUSADE's field staff in order to achieve this.

CRUSADE lost its funding for the work that they had started last year in Gummidipoondi block, one of four blocks that the project benefits. They asked if we could help, and we were pleased to do so. Our collaboration started in April and the agreed objectives for our support are shown below.

Objectives for 2021-2022:

Our collaboration will fund existing support in Gummidipoondi. Plans for continuation of the scheme include:

- Recruiting members for new PWDGs
- Skills training programmes for group members
- Distribution of saplings and seeds for home cultivation
- Supporting members in obtaining national ID cards
- Motivating members to set up bank accounts
- Supporting members in seeking economic activity
- Creating awareness of govern-

ment schemes and incentives

- Organising physiotherapy and assistive devices
- Building confidence and community within Gummidipoondi



Tailoring training in action

Achievements in the past 6 months:

Since our involvement in April 2021, CRUSADE has successfully formed nine new PWD groups. The total of PWD groups in the Gummidipoondi block is now 50, supporting over 500 people. Of the 50 groups, 30 have bank accounts. 400 members have obtained National ID cards and 312 members now receive a monthly maintenance allowance of Rs.1000/

month from the state. This activity has not only brought about huge benefits to group members, but has also engendered hope and confidence in the future where none existed.

Economic activities:

CRUSADE had previously trained 15 disabled members in tailoring from this block. After completing their 6-month course, participants have been provided with electric sewing machines. The machines have enabled sewers to earn an income by stitching clothes for neighbours and clients. On another note, several group members have been successful in obtaining loans from VPRC (Village Poverty Reduction Committee) and have used the money to extend their shops and businesses.

CRUSADE is currently gathering information on economic training possibilities within the newly formed groups and will be taking action next year.

Physiotherapy:

CRUSADE's disability project has hired a physiotherapist to assess members' needs. In Gummidipoondi block, 133 disabled members were screened and 53 were shown phys-

iotherapy they could practise at home. Members have expressed improvements in their mobility and daily life.



Physiotherapy consultation

Eight members were identified as in need of assistive devices which the project will provide over the coming months.

Setting up a trust:

A trust has been registered by CRUSADE under the name 'Vallamai', meaning 'strength'. The trust represents all the PWD groups in the four blocks, with one member from each block acting as a Trustee. In Gummidipoondi, 32 of the 50 groups have registered, each paying the entrance fee of Rs. 100.

This year, the trust provided a grant assistance of Rs.5,000 to the legal heir of a group member who passed

away due to illness in Enathimelpakkam village, Gummidipoondi.

Monitoring the scheme:

The 50 groups, in the block that SOTE now supports, have been formed into 10 clusters. Each month, a project coordinator attends cluster level meetings to discuss bank accounts, ID cards, physiotherapy needs, inclusion of new members and awareness of



Cluster meeting in progress

government schemes. The meetings also review the groups' meetings and recent activities.

CRUSADE have established an impressive network of groups that are specially tailored to support some of Tamil Nadu's most vulnerable people. We are delighted to be funding this project and look forward to its future outreach and impact.

CASE STUDY

Sudharani is 37 years old and lives in Kil Muthalambedu Telugu with her husband, Nagaraj, who is a painter by trade. Sudharani left school at the age of 15 with no formal qualifications.

When Sudharani joined CRUSADE's local PWDG it opened her eyes to the outside world and made her aware of how her life could change. Her group has 10 members, all of whom contribute Rs. 500/ month towards a group savings account. Their accumulated savings is currently Rs. 25,800 (around £2,500).

Since joining the group, Sudharani has been helped in obtaining a disability allowance of Rs. 1000/ month (around £10) from the Government. She has also secured a job card from the Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, which guarantees her work and wages for a minimum of 100 days a year.

Sudharani and 15 others participated in a six-month tailoring programme organised by CRUSADE. At the end of the training, all 15 members were presented with an electric sewing machine.

Sudharani tells CRUSADE "Since my training, I not only stitch clothes for my family, but also for neighbours. I earn Rs.2000 a month from stitching which gives me lots of confidence and satisfaction." She has secured a bank loan of Rs. 45,000 and states that "the group members have all benefited from membership, thank you all greatly".



Sudharani at home stitching clothes

ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER: New villages

Water is fundamental to our lives. We can live for some time without food but we need water on a daily basis to survive. Here in the UK we take for granted unlimited supplies of good drinking water available 24 hours a day. In the 250 plus rural villages in Tamil Nadu that we support none of them enjoy this sort of service.

It is true that now all the villages have some sort of government water supply. However, much of it is piped into the villages and will only be available for several hours a day from a few pipes placed around the village.

'Often there is just not enough water available, especially in the hot summer months when it is most needed'

Often there is just not enough water available, especially in the hot summer months when it is most needed. The water itself is often brackish and it certainly would not pass our cleanliness standards. Ideally it should be boiled before it is drunk but few families bother to do so because of the time and expense involved.

This is why SOTE has always supported water projects. For what would be a relatively small amount of money in the UK an independent supply of fresh drinking water can often be provided. The benefits of doing so are enormous. Incidences of water borne illnesses, the scourge of India, especially among the young, are much reduced. Much time and worry is saved if the villagers

(especially the women) have an all year round supply that they can control themselves.

The best solution we have found is to fund suitably located borewells with an electric pump and a storage tank. The planning of this has to be done in conjunction with the local Panchayat (the elected local government body) as they are responsible for water provision. CRUSADE, our partner organisation, is well versed in doing this and has built up a good relationship with the Panchayats over the years.

The first step is to employ a scientific water divining expert to identify the best site for drilling the borewell. Professional well drillers can then dig the well with the work being carried out in the dry season.

Two water projects have been completed this year and a third one has just started despite the problems brought about by lockdown in the summer months. Here are the details.

hardly believe their good fortune. The well was officially opened in September by Mr Jothiramalingham, the CEO of CRUSADE. (see photo). The total cost of the well, electric pump, storage tank and associated pipe work came to £1,800. The Panchayat has agreed to pay for the electricity to run the well and will undertake maintenance and any necessary repairs.



Akkarapakkam pump in use

Akkarapakkam/Tirunilai

These two hamlets comprising 90 families adjoin each other. Both suffer water shortages, especially in the summer, as well as poor quality of water. A well has been dug in a different location from the one initially selected by the Panchayat. This was done after studying the report by the water diviner and assessing the most convenient place to site the storage tank and tap. In the event this saved money as there was a big reduction in the length of piping required.

This well was dug to 55 metres and is producing a good supply of water which can be safely drunk. The tank is conveniently located for the two hamlets and the supply of water is no longer a problem for these people. The total cost of this installation was £1,600.

These water projects, like many before them funded by SOTE, have enhanced the quality of life of hundreds of people and, with your support, we will continue to fund such projects wherever we can.



Pump in Old Erumaivettipalayam

Old Erumaivettipalayam

This small village of 100 families is situated on higher ground and the existing government water pipe line struggles to pump water to the village overhead tank. Consequently the villagers were often short of water and were resigned to their fate.

After divining, a borewell was sunk to a depth of 70 metres and a 2,000 ltr water storage tank installed at a convenient location for the villagers nearby. The water is abundant and the quality is good. The villagers can



Akkarapakkam pump construction

THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

Over the past 33 years we have been consistent in our pledge to empower rural women in Tamil Nadu. Women's Self Help Groups (WSHGs) offer women the opportunity to apply for loans, learn skills, save money, and connect with like-minded individuals. We have also offered educational and skills training programmes as many women did not receive a satisfactory education.

It is our belief that women are the catalyst for change in rural villages. We are pleased to share case studies of how such women are benefiting from loans and training. The women in the groups we support are successful in repayments and continue to build a positive connection between banks, the public, and rural communities.

CASE STUDY

Indira, Kulathumedu village, Minjur

Indira, aged 34, is a member of the WSHG 'Deepam', meaning 'flame'. The group started in Kulathumedu village in 2015 and has 16 members. When the group began, each member contributed Rs.200/ month to a group savings account. As the group has grown in confidence and financial stature, the monthly contribution of group members has increased to Rs. 500. If a member takes a loan from the group, they pay a small interest fee. The total savings of Deepam WSHG is currently Rs. 1,62,000 (around £1,600).

Indira has managed a tailoring shop for the past four years. She has invested loans of Rs. 50,000 from PLF (Panchayat Level Federation) and Rs. 30,000 from her Self Help Group savings account. The money has been invested into sewing machines, a table for cutting clothes, sewing equipment, and has paid her rent in advance.

Indira and her male sewing assistant work an average of four days per week. After paying for rent and electricity, each earn a net income of around Rs. 12,000/ month. Indira left school with very few qualifications. She lives with her husband, who is a truck driver, and their two daughters aged 11 and 8. The loans that she obtained through CRUSADE have helped to improve the lives of her family and her business dramatically.



'I invested in my tailoring business and now employ a male assistant to keep up with demand'

CASE STUDY

Kavitha, Naikanapalli

Kavitha, aged 33, lives in the remote interior village of Naikanapalli. Her husband works as a helper in a nearby paper manufacturing company and they live in a small home with their two daughters. Neither Kavitha nor her husband continued education passed elementary years.



'Thanks to MASARD's adult literacy classes, I can read the amount in my bank account and transfer money'

Adult literacy classes for uneducated women like Kavitha were funded by SOTE in Naikanapalli and were conducted by Archana, a local teacher. When asked why she wanted to join the classes, Kavitha said that she was keen to learn financial literacy.

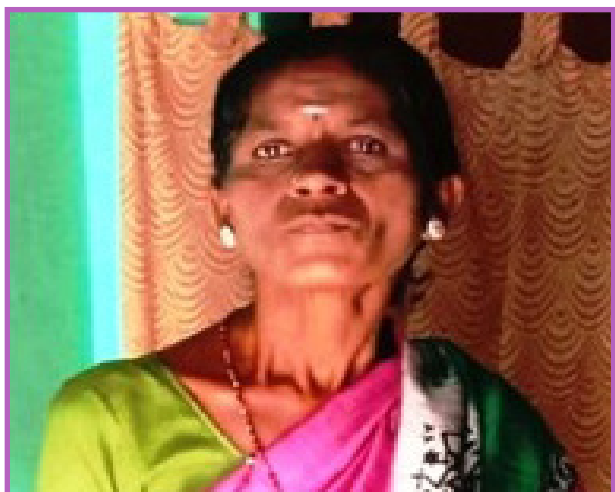
Kavitha explains "I work hard to save regular money. A few years ago, I had Rs. 20,000 in my bank account, but I didn't know how to fill in the bank forms to withdraw it. I wanted Rs. 10,000, so I asked a bank customer to help me. I didn't realise at the time, but the person helping me withdrew all my money and gave me Rs.10,000. When I visited the bank a month later to get the rest of my savings, I started crying when they told me it was gone. I soon realised what had happened."

After completing her classes, Kavitha is able to fill in bank forms without relying on anybody but herself. She can use ATMs and has learnt to transfer money through mobile phone applications. She says "I know now that I cannot be cheated easily".

CASE STUDY

Jyothamma, Addakurukki village

Jyothamma, aged 49, has five daughters and two sons. Two of her daughters are married, and her husband passed away last year due to Covid. Jyothamma was a case of child marriage and was unable to attend school due to her parents' poverty. She has a disability in that her head shakes involuntarily and she is also illiterate.



'My illiteracy caused me to travel 100kms in the wrong direction'

When SOTE funded an adult literacy programme in her village, Jyothamma was keen to join. She tells MASARD "I was eager to learn to read. I recently got on the wrong bus and travelled nearly 100kms in the wrong direction. My husband had taken work and we had not seen him in several months, we tried to find him. I thought that me and my children were travelling to Kadagathur, but we instead went to a faraway place called Kaatukovil."

The teacher running the training was Mangala, a resident of the nearby Pathakotte village. After hearing Jyothamma's story she signed her up to MASARD's six month training. Jyothamma regularly attended the classes and completed all 48 hours of training. She proudly announces "I can now read and write in Tamil, and even some words in English! I can read destination boards and am a confident traveller".

Jyothamma tells MASARD "I am very happy I attended these classes. I feel greatly empowered and am proud of my achievements. I can travel independently without fear. Thank you SOTE".

GOAT REARING: New project

CARE work with the Londor community, a begging community home to some of Tamil Nadu's most vulnerable people. The team support four semi-urban villages, home to a combined total of over 100 households. Community members live in small tarpaulin tent structures and naturally built huts on the outskirts of town. The Londor community are outcasts and live with very basic facilities.

Peter, CEO of CARE, states: "We have built trust with these communities and have come to understand the need for alternative and meaningful livelihood projects". After discussions with families, the request for goat rearing was predominant. SOTE have been funding this project since Feb 2021.

Goats produce kids, milk, and meat that is popular in the local area. Common grazing grounds enable goats to eat at no cost to the owner. After school, younger family members can also be involved in grazing the animals, which prevents child begging. So far, 13 households have been

trained at government farms and have been provided with three goats each. Participants proudly take their goats to graze from noon till 5pm. It has been reported that participants are enjoying a sense of purpose and feel motivated to break away from traditional begging cycles.

As herds grow, kids can be sold for breeding, milk, and meat. Every third kid will be donated to a new goat rearing household. The scheme has been intensely researched by the CARE team, with the aim of providing a sustainable source of income and hope.

Peter expresses: "We have taken on the big challenge of changing lifestyles within the begging community. We honour SOTE's efforts and give our heartfelt thanks for your valuable donation for this project."

He shares this quote from Kathy Calvin, Ex- CEO of the United Nations Foundations:

"Giving is not about making a Donation, it is all about making a Difference".

Amulu, aged 27, is married with two children aged 13 and 7. Amulu previously lost a child, Karthic, and has faced many challenges.

CARE describe her as a 'young energetic woman whose sacrifices for her family are outstanding'. She received three goats in August and is fully engaged in rearing them. She no longer goes begging and is consistently helped and encouraged by CARE staff. Her goats will litter in a few months. She conveys her heartfelt thanks to SOTE supporters.



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: £1,800 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 as well as helping 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. *For more information about sponsorships: www.sote.org.uk*

BECOME A PRIVATE DONOR

We have been blessed over the years with such generous private funders. As we continue to grow as a charity, we are inviting the participation of more private donors. Projects that have previously been privately funded include water access for villages, health intervention, and recycling plants. Depending on scale and outreach, individual projects range from £1,500 - £35,000. **If you or your business are eager to learn more about becoming a private donor, please email murray@sote.org.uk**

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 left to the charity will be free of inheritance tax. The amount left to SOTE 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.



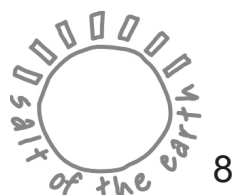
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ETHICAL GIFTS

Ethical gifts offer families most at need with hope and opportunity. Help families this Christmas on behalf of yourself, or a loved one. *For more information, please visit:*

www.sote.org.uk/ethical-gifts

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

FREE WILLS SERVICE

Do you want to create a will without the need for a solicitor or complicated paperwork? If so Free Wills could be the answer.

Free Wills is a service that creates for users a basic will, free of charge. If you want to, you can include a donation to Salt of the Earth and state what you wish to donate in the event of your passing. Our team members found the service very simple to use and it gave them peace of mind knowing that a will was in place.

Type www.freewills.co.uk/charity/sote into your browser. Then, follow the step-by-step instructions to complete your will free of charge.

MEMORIAL COLLECTIONS

Another way to help our work to continue would be to nominate SOTE to be the beneficiary of any collections that are taken as a result of your funeral and/ or memorial service. A recent such collection at a memorial gathering in Leicester raised over £800.

SALT OF THE EARTH - Registered Charity 328328

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