



VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (VRDP)

“Journey towards Community Building”

Village Reconstruction and Development Project (VRDP) is a development organization (NGO) founded in 1984 with the following vision and mission.

VISION : Egalitarian Society where human beings live in unity without discrimination of caste, religion, race, sex and language and share all natural resources equitably for achieving dignity in life and prosperity for generations.

MISSION : To facilitate and unite socially, economically, educationally, culturally and politically the disadvantaged people, especially Dalits, tribes, and women who are discriminated in family and in society and to empower them through concrete socio economic educational and political processes.



BACKGROUND

The first community intervention of VRDP was a campaign to eradicate the inhuman practice of female infanticide from rural communities in Salem district of Tamilnadu. Similar campaigns on social issues followed. Over the subsequent years, the organization has undertaken community development within the rights-based approach prevention of (sex selective abortions, violence on women and children, exclusion of people with disabilities tribal rights etc). It has pioneered initiatives and programs such as prevention of HIV & AIDS, micro finance, non- formal education, climate change mitigation, prevention, disability prevention, community-based people's organizations in the district. The partner community of VRDP is a demographic population of more than 25,000 families below poverty line in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry states in India.

MILE STONES

- Eradication of the Practice of Sex Selective Abortion and Female Infanticide in focus Districts
- Education of 10,000+ women in 185 villages in Salem, Namakkal, Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts on legal rights and preventive strategies against violence on women support to start Kurinji Women's Movement in the 4 districts and emergence of 400 women panchayat leaders from it
- Promotion of basic education for Tribal and Dalit children in 200+ village
- Significant presence in Right to Education Campaign in 3 districts
- Promotion & Facilitation of various peoples' movements such as
- TAI and TAAK with over 20,000 tribals in 17 districts of the state.
- Kurinji Children's Network and Activity Clubs for 4,000 children
- Formation of Kurinji PWDS Federation for People with Disabilities
- Felicitation of Federation of 2,600 Female sex workers in Salem
- Federation of 10,700 Tsunami Victims in Nagapattinam & Karaikal
- Promotion of Organic Farmers' Association in tribal area of Kadayampatti block.
- Convenor of 2 state-level networks (TAFSC & SAM) and leading 6 zonal / district level programmes
- 2,00,000 trees planted in tribal areas to reduce the impact of climate change.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF VRDP'S PROJECTS

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

VRDP works in 82 villages in Kadayampatti block of Salem district. Beginning in 1995 with campaigns against sex-selective abortions and female infanticide, VRDP moved on to literacy and legal awareness for women's sanghams, empowering them to address issues of violence on women, child marriages and chronic indebtedness. Later VRDP equipped women with vocational skills to become economically independent. Over 482 women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the working villages were given micro-credit and moral support to members.

The Kurinji Mahalir Iyakkam (Kurinji Women's Federation) with 10,987 members has a presence in the four districts of Salem, Krishnagiri, Namakkal and Dharmapuri, of T.N. State and in Karaikal region of Puducherry state. It helps mobilize funds for the women's SHGs, runs a Women's Grievance Cell and channelized vocational training for over 3000 women. Thanks to it, 8000+ women have come out of debt trap.



Tribal Association for Fifth Schedule Campaign (TAFSC)



VRDP has been assisting 25 NGOs / Tribal Rights organizations working in 17 districts of Tamilnadu in their demands for implementation of 5th Schedule according to the Indian Constitution which provides for autonomy and self-rule to Tribal Communities in Tamil Nadu. Advocacy and lobbying has been carried out at local and national levels for ensuring the traditional rights of tribals. Awareness campaigns on Forest Rights Act 2006 has been carried out in tribal villages to raise awareness that they can claim rightful title to the forest lands they have cultivated since generations.

TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

Tribal empowerment is the backbone of VRDP's interventions. VRDP is a household name for majority of tribal communities in Tamil Nadu because of its grassroots presence and espousing the cause of rights of tribals to land and dignity.

TAMILAGA ADIVASI IYAKKAM (TAI- Tamil Nadu Tribal Movement)

VRDP entailed itself in tribal empowerment as a response to atrocities against the tribal communities to loot their resources and abuse their women by high caste community in Kadayampatti block. Its work began with literacy classes and then organization of tribal groups. Now the tribal people have been united into an immense federation / movement of 7225 tribal members from 3 districts under the banner of Tamilaga Adivasi Iyakkam(TAI- Tamil Nadu Tribal Movement) for their rights.

TAMILAGA ADIVASI AMAIPPUKALIN KOOTTAMAIPPU (TAAK):

VRDP has supported with training and capacity building 15 tribal associations working on tribal land and forest rights. These 15 tribal associations have come together under TAAK, a state-level network representing 16 tribal groups (including 6 primitive tribes) to demand land and livelihood rights which are being taken away from them in the name of development. TAAK Forum has 8500 active tribal members through their parent organizations.

DIGNITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs)

The Community-based rehabilitation program for PWDs was started in 2006 in the hill block of Jamuna Marathur in Tiruvannamalai District among tribal communities. Identified as having high prevalence of disability in Tamil Nadu, particularly among tribal communities the area is remote of access with little or no transport or infrastructure facilities. VRDP works with 802 disabled men, women and children in 12 panchayats of Jamunamathur block. The focus is on strengthening livelihood options for PWDs, their rights in the family and in society through collective accessing of government welfare schemes, awareness training and campaigns to eradicate social stigma and prevalence of disability. Over the last 5 years the occurrence of disability has been reduced to nominal in the project areas, thanks to the concerted efforts of VRDP for preventive education to marriageable couples, students and children.



STI/ HIV /AIDS - PREVENTION & CONTROL

Tamil Nadu AIDS Initiative (TAI)

VRDP has been involved in AIDS Prevention and Control in Salem District since 1998 when the pioneer programmes were introduced by the state and NGOs. Later as part of the TAI network, VRDP organized 2,600 female sex workers into SHGs. In the programme, training for behavior change, establishment of two clinics, peer education, condom promotion and collectivization were programme components to help sex workers in awareness of safe sex practices.

Community Based Care and Support for Children with HIV(CLHIV)

VRDP is also implementing a care and support project for Children living with HIV/AIDS in 3 blocks and



Salem Corporation in Salem district. Nearly 400 infected and affected children with HIV/AIDS have been provided nutritional, educational, treatment and referral facilities. The reduction of social stigma and discrimination against such children continue to be underlying concerns of VRDP.

LINK WORKERS SCHEME

This core intervention concentrates on rural populations vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, especially women and youth. VRDP works in 120 vulnerable villages in 5 taluks of Salem District. Identification of high-risk groups, awareness education to adolescent girls & boys, women & youth, motivation to go for treatment (ART), treatment of sexually transmitted infections and Condom Promotion are the major intervention under this project.

DISASTER REDUCTION AND REHABILITATION

VRDP took up relief and rehabilitation in affected areas of Karaikal in Puducherry after the tsunami hit the Tamil Nadu coast in December 2004. VRDP continued to be involved until late 2010 with 18 coastal villages (including 7 non-fisher Dalit villages) of Karaikal Region. The organization undertook construction of 214 permanent houses, skill training for livelihoods, running child activity centers, micro-credit and micro-insurance to benefit 6,000 women through a Women's Federation, organic farming to renew tsunami-affected fields, and disaster preparedness training for communities. The uniqueness of the interventions compared to many other charitable organizations is that these were rights-based and within the overall VRDP's mission.

CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

VRDP in partnership with American Forests Global Releaf, USA initiated a program of regeneration of lost forest in Kannapadi a tribal village through planting of 2,00,000 tree saplings. Besides, VRDP has been engaging the school and college students to reduce climate change through tree planting activities. It has developed Green Cadets in its working area and raised voice at climate change conferences and seminars at both local and international levels.

TRIBAL RESOURCE & RESEARCH CENTRE (TRRC)

In order to meet the long-needed gap in services to NGOs and CBOs, VRDP has started a resource centre for training and documentation. This includes action-research on various social issues, especially as a support service to tribal organizations. Data and information collection (including from the Internet), publication of research papers, and obtaining documentary evidence to support social issues are part of the objectives of the centre.

PUBLICATIONS

1. Research book on Female infanticide in Salem & Namakkal District.
2. Tamilnadu Tribal Struggles towards Land Rights and Forest Rights Act 2006 (2009)
3. A study book on Stolen Education and Neglected Education System (About educational situation in Government tribal schools)
4. A Handbook on Awakening for Non formal Education
5. Guides on Environment for School Students
6. Adivasis' speak out – Atrocities against Adivasis in Tamil Nadu by Aloysius Irudayam SJ and Jayshree P. Mangubhai, Published from Books for Change, Bangalore (2004)

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR NGOs and CBOs

One of the core components of VRDP'S intervention programmes is Capacity Building of the participating organizations and communities. VRDP's strategy is to promote self reliance and independence of its focus group communities. The training team of VRDP has built up the capacities and capabilities of NGOs, CBOs, Women's organizations, tribal associations, federation of people living with HIV / AIDS and Differently Abled Persons. VRDP has paid special focus on Capacity Building of NGOs in Tamil Nadu to work efficiently for their focus group communities. Training on new Acts and Legislations concerning Forest, Tribes, Women, Children, Education, Governance etc, and Government Schemes, and Campaign and Advocacy skills are conducted on periodical basis to 25 NGOs in Tamil Nadu. Recently capacity building training was conducted on Climate Change Issues and Concerns to these NGOs to understand the latest threat to the nature and poor communities in India. Thus the trained NGOs are functioning efficiently and according to the signs of the time reflecting the core principles and values of their lead organization VRDP in their districts and villages.

NETWORKING, CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY

VRDP believes that social change can be effected only through alliance building, networking, campaigning and advocacy efforts. Learning from the success of various networks in India, VRDP has attached great importance to align with district, state, national and international organizations and networks. Because of its commitment and example of promoting people's organizations and federations, VRDP has been entrusted with the responsibility of leading state level networks such as Social Action Movement, Campaign against Sex Selective Abortion, Campaign against Female Infanticide, Tribal Association for Fifth Schedule Campaign, Coalition for Climate Justice etc. VRDP has been championing for the rights of tribal communities in Tamil Nadu through these networks and national level associations.

JOIN HANDS WITH VRDP IN PROMOTING A EQUITABLE SOCIETY

- Choose an area of your interest and involve with us in your own little way
- Donate for the education of Tribal children in our working villages
- Help children with Disabilities for Corrective Medical treatment
- Assist the parents of children with Mental Disorders
- Help Persons / Children Living with HIV / AIDS
- Donate for the Campaign and advocacy for Land Rights of Tribes
- Meet the cost of Seedlings and Saplings for regeneration of native forests
- Help to construct Biogas Plants and plant Solar Panels for reduction of the use of Fuel and Energy
- Help spread awareness on Climate Change among the vulnerable communities
- Contribute for the Construction of Vocational Training College for the youth from tribal and other marginalized communities



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1335-A Kurinji Illam, Near Sathya Nagar, Kondappanaikanpatty
Salem – 636 008 Tamil Nadu INDIA Phone: +91427 2004192
E-mail: vrdpسلم@yahoo.com Website: www.vrdp.org