

Project Title: Holistic development of salt pan workers and their families living in Tuticorin and surrounding villages (Project period January 2020 to March 2023)

Partners: EUCANAID, Zoutmijnkinderen - Belgium, Education world- France and Castricum foundation helps Muttathara - Netherlands

In order to empower the families of Saltpan workers residing in Tuticorin region, activities related to Community organization, Community Education, Holistic Health and Nutrition and Economic empowerment were planned for the project period (January 2020 – March 2023). The activities achieved are stated below.

I. Community organization and training

It comprises of three major components of training of Village development committee (VDC), youth committee and Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs) in each of the six project villages namely Tupaspatti, Vellapatti, Rajapandinagar, Kalaignanapuram, Kaloorani and Thulukkankulam.

a. Training of Village Development Committee



SCAD Nirman formed one VDC in each project village in the year 2020 comprising of 72 members. As these committees are responsible for the overall project implementation and its sustainability at the village level it is necessary to motivate and train them at least twice in a year on village development programmes. Out of 72 members an average of 61 members attended and benefited from the trainings

conducted during the project period. Developmental activities such as renovation of both preschools at Kalaignanapuram and Tupaspatti villages and restoration of Ooranie (Village ponds) in the villages Thulukkankulam, Tupaspatti and Kaloorani were meticulously planned and executed with the support of the VDC and villagers under the leadership of SCAD NIRMAN.

b. Training of Youth committee

It is planned to give two trainings per year to the six youth committee comprising of 80 youths who readily volunteer for any developmental works pertaining to their villages. As planned two trainings were given to each youth committee where an average of 72 youths out of 80 participated every year to the trainings, including Team building, Importance of Planting Trees to improve green cover, Water management, Current affairs, Ooranie management, Career counseling and Employment schemes. They also extended their support hand in hand with VDCs, WSHGs in executing developmental activities like Ooranie restoration, Renovation of Preschools concerning their villages.



c. Training of Women Self Help Groups

A total number of 48 Self Help Groups are active in the six project villages comprising of 646 women. The members of Self Help Groups play a vital role in execution of the developmental programs concerning their villages. SCAD Nirman provided two trainings each to the 48 Women Self Help Groups from the six project villages. An average of 553 members participated. Activities such as savings and credit linkages, Health and hygiene, Income generation initiatives, Ooranie restoration at

Thulukkankulam, Tuppasspatti and Kaloorani and renovation of Balwadies at Kalaiganapuram and Tuppasspatti were discussed and planned. The members of the SHGs played a vital role in planning and executing all the developmental activities in their villages.



II. Education

a. Supplementary education Centre



In the area of Education, conducting supplementary education classes in the six villages and organizing career counseling were planned. As rural children are deprived of individual attention in their schools which lack of basic infrastructures and teachers, SCAD Nirman appointed one volunteer in each village to meet the educational needs of the children. A total of 226 children are eligible to be part of the centre and an average of 174 children is regular in utilizing this opportunity. During the Covid 19 outbreak most of the schools were closed and the only opportunity for the village children was to attend supplementary education

classes. To make the learning more interesting, SCAD Nirman established an environmental team that is responsible for organizing a school garden in each supplementary centre. To address the overall development of the students at the centre, education materials and sports materials were provided to each supplementary centre so that the students develop not only in studies but also in extracurricular activities and sports.

b. Provision of charts and Models and play materials to the Balwadies



SCAD NIRMAL wanted to equip the preschool to be conducive for early education. Quality Teaching and Learning materials including Television, were provided to the six Balwadies. 126 Children were very happy to see their Balwadies equipped with learning materials. We could see them utilizing all that is provided whenever we could visit them.

c. Career counseling programme



Though students from our project villages study well, yet they lack guidance in choosing their stream towards pursuing higher education. Students who expressed their willingness to pursue higher education were given career counseling by educational professionals from Engineering, polytechnic and teacher training colleges. 129 students took part in the three career counseling programme conducted. As a result 43 of them are already pursuing their higher education in the field of Arts and Science, Engineering, Physical education and Nursing.

d. Renovation of Balwadies :



Preschools (Balwadies) from the Villages Kalaiganapuram and Tupaspatti were renovated with support of the local community. A total number of 55 students benefited from this. Both Balwadies were given a face lift and made conducive for the children to learn their early education with safety and creativity. The buildings were equipped with teaching and learning materials, including digital.

III. Health and Nutrition

Health and Nutrition is the major area that needs attentions pertaining to the lifestyle of Saltpan workers. Hence SCAD Nirman with the support of EUCANAID undertook the following activities

a. Training of Health Committee Members



SCAD Nirman felt that its necessary to train the members from Health Committees as they are instrumental in combating any health-related issues in their villages by planning and organizing health interventions. A total number of 30 members including members from WSHGs, Village Health Nurse and Balwadies teachers from the six villages were trained twice in a year by medical professionals on the basis of the medical needs of the villages.

b. Health Clinic

Health Clinic at Rajapandinagar caters to the needs of minor ailments like fever, cold, back pain, neck pain, foot ulcer etc and 1382 persons (Male 309 – Female 1073) benefited from this clinic in three years. 82 persons were referred to the nearby government hospital for further treatment. The presence of the clinic is a blessing as they receive free treatment for most of the minor ailments that could be expensive if they visit hospitals or clinics.



c. Special Health Camps



Needs were identified by VDCs, WSHGs and Health Committees, and medical experts and care systems were approached for conducting special medical camps. It was decided to conduct three special health camps in each village in every quarter. The following camps were organized: like General Medical camp (conducted in Rajapandi nagar, Thulukkankulam and Kaloorani), Eye camp (conducted in Rajapandinagar, Kalaiganapuram and Tuppaspatti), Ortho camp (conducted in Vaipar, Tuppaspatti, Kalaiganapuram and Thulukkankulam), Dental camp (conducted in Kaloorani, Thulukkankulam and Kalaiganapuram), Covid 19 vaccination camp (Conducted in Rajapandinagar), Gynecology camp (Conducted in Kaloorani) and Cancer camp (conducted in Rajapandinagar). These were organized in collaboration with Agarwal Eye hospital, Nellai Cancer centre and an Gynecology & ortho surgeon. They benefited 1012 people in total: 317 male, 629 female and 66 children in total.

d. Health Awareness Campaign



Health awareness campaigns were conducted in the 6 villages, two times in a year with the support of trained health personnel. These focused on safe drinking water, communicable diseases, antenatal and post-natal care, preventive and curative health care, hygiene, importance of traditional food etc. 36 health awareness campaigns were conducted in the 6 villages which benefited 1187 persons: 189 male, 744 female and 254 children. Villagers were encouraged to cook traditional nutritious recipes and the best recipes were awarded with prizes. Collective participation of the villages was the highlight of these campaigns.

e. Provision of Safety items

A survey identified that the people most in needs were 1163 persons from the six villages who work under hot sun. Each year, a certain number of saltpan workers are given safety items like eye glasses, head loaders and boots. In three years, the 1163 beneficiaries were identified and safety items were distributed: a pair of eye glasses each, 1161 boots and 447 Head loaders.



f. Nutrition awareness and Demonstration

Nutrition awareness programs and demonstrations will be conducted two times annually in every village. They aim at sensitizing the community about the need for consuming nutritional food and equipping them to prepare nutritional food with locally available ingredients. The health of adolescent girls, pregnant mothers and lactating mothers is crucial, and SCAD Nirman organized 36 nutrition awareness training and demonstration covering each village, which were attended by 414 people.



g. Distribution of Nutrimix

Distribution of Supplementary nutrition was done to 30 pregnant mothers and 30 lactating mothers to boost their immunity and body weight. This contributed to ensure 96 safe births. There has been no incidence of cesarean among 96 babies born in the three years of the project.



h. Kitchen Garden



550 kitchen gardens were established in the backyard of members of women self-help groups to ensure organic and pest free vegetables. SCAD Nirman distributed organic kitchen garden seed kit for easy and complete organic farming, allowing them to harvest pest free and organic vegetables for themselves. Around 12.000 kgs of vegetables were harvested from the kitchen gardens.

i. Training of Adolescent girls



108 training sessions were organized in which 953 adolescent girls from the six project villages took part. These covered issues such as anaemia, iron deficiency, nutritional benefits of vegetables, menstrual hygiene, personal hygiene, psychological aspects, food awareness, prevention of sexual harassment, communication guidelines, education for skin care, importance of minor millets, prevention of disability, healthy food habits and cancer.

j. Tools & Equipments to reduce drudgery (Research & development)

The hard-laborious salt pan work is very much prone for drudgery especially among women and any effort to reduce the drudgery will bring great relief for these workers. Mechanisation in small scale will be of great help to small scale salt pan producers. SCAD Nirman involved the research and development skills of Mother Theresa Engineering College students with whom several meetings were conducted. The students were taken to the saltpan to give them a first-hand experience of the hard work that saltpan workers do. After thorough analysis the research team from Mother Theresa College came out with designs for helmet and manual conveyor that shifts salt from the field to the storage area. The designs were presented by the team and approved for proceeding with making prototype. Prototype is nearly completed and will be taken soon to the saltpan for the demo in all the six villages.

k. Training for Village health nurses:



With the aim of improving the performance of village health nurses appointed by the government, special trainings were conducted for 6 village nurses in the areas of community health, prevention and management of anaemia and malnourishment in women and children, gynaecological problems of women, cancer awareness, lifestyle disease awareness, healthy food habits, millet consumption

awareness, etc., This training was conducted by physicians and health experts. A total number of 24 nurses were trained in the project duration of three years.

IV. Environment protection

a. Renovation of traditional water bodies



It was planned to renovate a traditional water bodies in the project villages every year. Traditional water bodies from the villages of Thulukkankulam, Tupaspatti and Kaloarani were restored by de-silting, strengthening of bunds, creating of baby ponds, clearing the inlet channels and planting of trees around the bunds. A total number of 1564 people are the direct beneficiaries while 1093 are the indirect beneficiaries.

V. Economic Empowerment

a. Market oriented Employability training



The school dropped out, less educated and unemployed youth /women in the age group of 18-35 years in 6 villages were identified by the field staff of SCAD Nirman. 71 candidates were shortlisted for the rigorous training into employability skills so that they become self efficient in starting their journey as entrepreneurs. Candidates were trained into the trades of Tailoring (24), Beautician (15), Electrician (8),

Driving(6), Sales and Marketing (6), Fishnet making (10) and Two Wheeler mechanism (2). It is to be noted that candidates who underwent two wheeler mechanism, fishnet making, beautician course, and tailoring are already on the road to sustainability.



VI. SIYB training



A ten day "Start and Improve Your Business" (SIYB) course was given to 134 women working in Saltpans in three years, with the view to give them the



capacity to start small businesses during the off season when the rain prevents them from harvesting salt and confine them in their houses.



SIYB training was provided in three phases to 134 women. The participants learnt under three modules: Generating your business ideas (GYB), Starting your Business (SYB) and Improving your Business. These lasted two, three and five days respectively. A total of 34 Income generation Trades

were established in three years as follows: Fish net making (1 No), Tailoring unit (4 Nos), Fish sales (3 Nos), Wet grinding (4 Nos), Tea shop (1 No), Grocery shop (1 No), Fancy Shop (1 No), Goat rearing (15 Nos), Vegetable shop (1 No), Readymade unit (1 No), Piggery unit (1 No). All the thirty four saltpan women are already on the road to sustainability.

VII. Response to Covid 19

We were able to support the families affected during the Covid 19 pandemic. A total number of 114 people benefited from a Covid 19 relief camp where safety kits like sanitizers mask and provisions for a month were distributed, together with advice on the preventive and curative aspects of Covid 19. We wholeheartedly thank EUCANAID for the timely help.



Conclusion

EUCANAID board was so kind to sanction this project. We at SCAD Nirman take this opportunity to thank EUCANAID for the continued support and encouragement in implementing this unique project for the welfare of saltpan workers. Without the co funding and generous contribution from Zoutmijnkinderen - Belgium, Education world-France and Castricum foundation helps Muttathara – Netherlands this could not have happened. We wholeheartedly thank all our partners for the generous support and encouragement.