

Issue 69 June 2023  
SALT OF THE EARTH  
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www.sote.org.uk  
Patron: Jeremy Irons



# Saltseller

## Our Return to India



Billie, Murray & Janet join environmental march!

## TO INDIA AGAIN - AT LAST!

What a great joy it was to visit our three partner organisations after an enforced absence of three years. At all locations we were warmly welcomed and it was so good to see and hear of the progress that has been made despite the financial and emotional ravages of the covid pandemic.

We in the UK undoubtedly suffered during the pandemic but the rural poor villagers who we support had it much worse. There was little or no financial support during the extensive lock downs, food was difficult to get and expensive, all schools were shut down for 18 months and the limited medical facilities were overwhelmed. The combined money raised, amounting to over £ 94,000 from our appeals, helped thousands of people to avoid starvation. Everywhere we went we were thanked most genuinely and profusely for this timely aid. It was good to catch up on the long running

programmes we support but it was even better to see several new projects that we had agreed to during our enforced absence. I was most moved by spending a day with people on our new disability programme at CRUSADE. These people are severely disadvantaged in an already unfair society. It brought a lump to my throat to hear some of their stories and how we have been able to help them.

At CARE we met with the families who had benefited from a goat rearing scheme that was providing alternative employment to begging. The women concerned have gone through a tough learning curve but the programme is well launched. The begging community which CARE helps is hugely disadvantaged and families struggle to register as citizens under the new government identity card regulations. Not having an ID card means that they are not officially recognised by the government and so are ineligible for any state assistance.

MASARD had started a nutritional

porridge mix scheme to combat the effects of malnutrition which had been exacerbated by the pandemic. We were able to confirm that the children were benefiting from this much needed and welcomed programme. Understandably there is a long waiting list!

We were glad to see that activities to promote the environment had not been forgotten and we were delighted to join with over 100 women on an environmental awareness march and rally in their village. Local government officials were happy to join in and support the event, which was very good to see.

**We left feeling uplifted and further motivated to support the excellent work that is being done. Your donations help to better the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who are considerably less fortunate than ourselves.**

*Murray Frankland*

Murray Frankland, Managing Trustee

# VISITING PROJECTS

An overview of our visit to SOTE projects funded by supporter donations

## ENVIRONMENTAL

Each of our three partners has demonstrated great passion for the environment and has helped us implement incentives and expand our environmental work beyond our expectations.

More than 20 awareness campaigns have taken place over the past few years. On February 14th 2023, the SOTE team were lucky enough to join a parade and witness a campaign in action!

The campaign took weeks of planning and was attended by government officials and over 200 women (plus several interested bystanders from the local village). The day started with women marching through the streets holding placards and chanting phrases about our changing planet. The crowd cheered and echoed statements as CRUSADE's megaphone stated facts about the importance of planting trees. A memorable moment was watching the march stop traffic and frustrated two-wheelers and rickshaw drivers were forced to wait for the crowd of environmental protesters to cross their path!

The parade ended under a large banyan tree, with refreshments and amplifiers, ready for a series of songs and speeches. Both Janet



Environmental campaign speeches in action!

and Murray addressed the crowd and thanked participants for their enthusiasm. Janet held up a cloth bag that has been provided to local shopkeepers, to limit the use of single-use plastic, which received a great cheer from the crowd.

The SOTE team visited a one-acre piece of government land where 400 SOTE trees were planted. CRUSADE staff had worked incredibly hard to gain permission from the panchayat and were most pleased to inaugurate their achievement with the help of Murray and Janet. The 400 saplings were planted by local women workers and will be watered by the same women daily.

At MASARD's Ashagram compound, our team spent a lovely Sunday afternoon exploring the green landscape, rich with thousands of SOTE trees. A wide variety of trees have been planted over the past five years; the oldest trees are impressive at over 8 meters tall! The young saplings are being maintained by a dedicated team of men and women, who treat the trees 'like their children'.

In 2022 alone, MASARD planted more than 2000 new trees within the compound's grounds. The fruits these saplings produce, along with the thousands of other trees, will be sold for income for MASARD and some will be kept to be enjoyed by staff, children, Women's Self Help Group members and visitors.

Billie and Lena met two women kitchen garden participants who have been supported by the MASARD team. Both plots were growing a variety of fruit and veg. One lady with two young children explained that the garden meant the family could **"eat nutritious food at a cheap price."** The mother also explained that **"wastewater harvesting has been interesting and resourceful"**. Another participant was a

grandmother who told us that she was **"once seen as an unskilled grandma with no voice"**. But now she feeds the whole family with her crops and expressed that daily maintenance of her garden gives her a **"sense of pride and purpose"**.



Murray inaugurating 400 SOTE trees on government land

Kasthuri, aged 47 works at MASARD's compound and cleans the Rural Development Centre in Kamandoddi. Before her roles at MASARD, her only source of income was irregular agriculture work. She tells the SOTE team:

**"Daily we pour water. We are very happy to see the plants grow. I look after them as if they were my children"**.

She and her husband recently purchased a cow, which she is deeply fond of. Kasthuri is a positive light around the campus and is well-loved by MASARD staff. Her husband is accessing medical support through SOTE's cloud clinic for a lung condition. They both requested that Lena sends thanks to SOTE supporters for giving them the opportunity for a different life.



Kasthuri at MASARD compound

## EMPOWERING WOMEN

Visiting women's projects has always been an important part of our visits to India. Janet has spent many hours over the years sitting with women, listening to their stories, and giving encouraging speeches to groups. Women are the catalyst of change among rural populations, and we are very proud to help give women the tools to motivate themselves and others.

SOTE's revolving fund has lent over £37,000 of manageable loans to Women's Self Help Group (WSHG) members at CRUSADE, at a fraction of the cost of local loan sharks. CRUSADE was pleased to report that they had received 100% repayments from women in 2022.

Our team visited one of the 450+ WSHGs at CRUSADE, a group of 14, who had benefitted from SOTE's revolving fund. The group were previously given 1.5 lakh (around £1500) split between members. **Annakili, a daily wage agricultural worker, aged 45, used the loan to pay for her son's engineering course and her daughters nursing university degree.**

**Vijaya, aged 35, used the loan for home renovations.**

Each group member saves 200 rupees (around £2) a month in a communal fund. In total, the group have 56,000 rupees (around £520) in common funds. A second loan of 4.2 lakhs from SOTE's revolving fund (around £4,200) was passed on to the group by Murray. The group loan will be split amongst members and used for home renovations, small businesses, and schooling, to be paid off over 15 months.

When asked what their experiences were of being in this group, one member said that they **'gain so many benefits because of the group'** and went on to explain that her group **'helps us save money, get outside resources, get educated and training'**. Another added that they **'live a better life because of the knowledge and support of the group, and are able to help and advise other women'**.



Kani at her clothes shop



Murray handing cheque to WSHG

We met a lady named Kani, who had benefited from a loan obtained from her WSHG. She has been a member of her group for 23 years. She worked for many years as a tailor and with the support of CRUSADE she purchased a small shop two years ago. Now, she earns up to 3,000 rupees per month gross income and shared with us:

**"My most popular selling items are men's shorts and tops. People love my shop and I love picking stock for my customers!"**

Janet was delighted to present a young mother with a Newborn baby and Mother kit, donated through SOTE's ethical gift scheme. The kit contained a baby mosquito net, baby oil, clothes, and herbal remedies. SOTE supporters donated 13 kits to mothers in 2022.

## MEETING CHILDREN

Lena, our Development Officer, met with sponsored children on her visit. Children aged 5-17 introduced themselves with smiling faces, sharing words they had learnt in English. The children were confident and chatty and many of them had grown more than a foot since she last met them in 2020!

Our child sponsorship scheme helps to pay for health, training, and support in communities and also pays for extra-curricular classes, educational equipment, and an annual popular school trip.

We visited extra-curricular classes in both secondary and primary schools

with MASARD's specially appointed teachers. For an hour during the school day, teachers help groups of around 13 students per year group catch up on homework and learn extra-curricular English.

At CARE, young children visit the CARE centre and are taught English and encouraged to explore their creativity. Sponsored children at CARE are from the Landor (begging) community, and have limited access to pencils and paints at home. Creating with CARE is the highlight of the day for both children and staff. Billie was handed a drawing by a young boy, which she now treasures.

**To sponsor a child for £18 a month, please visit : [www.sote.org.uk/sponsor-a-child](http://www.sote.org.uk/sponsor-a-child)**



MASARD sponsored children



Billie receiving drawing at CARE

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

Providing access to healthcare in rural villages is one of SOTE's largest projects in terms of funding and reach. CRUSADE and MASARD have been fundamental in expanding our health care incentives. In 2023, we are proud to offer a variety of healthcare and wellbeing incentives across Tamil Nadu, many of which we visited on our return to India.



Dr. Vasanth at CRUSADE clinic

Mobile clinics offer free advice and medicines in hard-to-reach rural villages, where communities lack access to healthcare. Each year, CRUSADE enable consultations for over 6000 rural patients in 53 villages. CRUSADE also run a drop-in clinic next to their centre. The SOTE team rode in CRUSADE's Medical Jeep, funded by SOTE back in 2018, with Dr Vasanth. He shared that since the timely support from CRUSADE during Covid, homeopathic remedies have been widely accepted and requested. The reputation of joint pain oils, immunity boosters, and medicinal remedies are being shared among communities. One elderly gentleman recently shouted to Dr Vasanth in the street **'This doctor changed my life, go to him!'**.

As well as mobile clinics, CRUSADE has been focusing on wellbeing. This development comes off the back of an external evaluation of the SOTE health project. The report highlighted the positive work CRUSADE are doing, and suggested expanding their healthcare incentives by implementing mental health training, life skills classes, and setting up health committees. All suggestions have been implemented across 2023 with great enthusiasm.

All CRUSADE staff and village animators have undergone three days of mental health training. The staff expressed that the training has transformed their approach to health care. One female village worker told the SOTE team:

**"The mental health training funded by SOTE helped me identify a woman in crisis. The lady's husband died towards the end of her pregnancy, and her behaviour was becoming more distressed. She would walk the streets screaming day and night. We supported her daily and helped her attend a specialised care facility. Now, she is able to see a more positive future and is processing her husband's death at no danger to herself or her child."**

Health committees have been formed to help put pressure on local governments regarding local water, livelihood, and health issues. We met with a committee in Enathimelpaklam village whose 15 members included an award winning local teacher, business owners and CRUSADE village workers. The group meet once a month and were integral in supporting CRUSADE's attempt to convince local government to grant access to an acre of land for tree planting. They have restored two local public toilets, and plan to provide every household with cloth bags to reduce plastic waste.



'Walking in another person's shoes'

Life skills training has so far trained 1063 women from 128 WSHGs. Participants undergo six training sessions, covering topics such as empathy, confidence, communication, and kindness. At an adult life skills class run by female doctor Dr. Hari Priya from CRUSADE, women

were enjoying a 'walking in another person's shoes' activity, to help teach empathy. A female Panchayat President who attends the sessions expressed:

**"I enjoy learning with the women in my community. I want these women to know I am present, and that I care about their needs. These classes have taught me everyone is equal."**

The SOTE team also attended an extra-curricular life skills lesson at a secondary school, where a young man stood up proudly stating:

**'Life skills has given me the confidence to ask my parents for more school equipment for my studies. I am shy, but now I feel brave. I now help other students when I see they are upset'**

Women's Wellness Camps headed by Dr. Hari Priya are also a new incentive. Dr. Hari Priya told SOTE that at first, the generational taboos around women's health held women back from approaching her at camps. However, after visiting villages a few times, she shares that she is approached by women eager to share their experiences and ask her questions. She has noticed that women are starting to talk openly about their health concerns with other women.



Dr. Hari Priya at Women's Wellness Camp

Due to their reputation for providing health care services to the rural poor, CRUSADE has acted as the link between Venkateshwara Homeopathic Medical College and local school aged children. Final year medical students are gaining valuable experience running health check-up camps

for school children in six villages. The SOTE team visited a camp in action and were warmly welcomed by students, college staff, and the school principal, who thanked us for making this connection possible.



SOTE team & college students

MASARD works with conventional medicines and visit 12 SOTE villages once every two months, seeing an average of 25 patients per clinic.

Billie and Lena visited a mobile clinic in action and asked patients of all ages about their experience. One lady, aged 28, had her blood pressure measured 108/80. She had complaints of headaches and multiple migraines. The doctor advised her to drink more water, regularly, and prescribed her calcium and multi-vitamin tablets.

Several primary school-aged children and a baby were experiencing similar symptoms of coughing and wheezing. They were prescribed anti-allergy tablets, as Dr. Sudhakar explained that dust levels are high during the start of the year. Parents expressed that the medication eased children's distress and improved

symptoms significantly.



Young boy distressed with allergies

MASARD's cloud clinic is gaining popularity as a reputable facility for long-term illnesses and specialised support. The cloud clinic room at MASARD's Rural Development Centre in Kamandoddi has ECG, stethoscope, Blood pressure, pulse oximeter and uric acid test equipment. MASARD staff Nandhini, and her husband Selveara (who volunteers his time), support patients through a Q&A style app which then connects to a suitable doctor via video call.

The cloud clinic supports 4-5 patients a week. Lena sat in on a consultation with Kasthuri's (MASARD gardener) husband, who has a long-term lung condition. His breathing was checked by Selveara and he answered several medical questions before speaking with the doctor online. Missing a day's work, travelling to hospital, and paying hospital fees, would cost him around 2-3 thousand rupees (£20-£30). The online cloud service, including prescription, costs him 250 rupees (around £2.50) each time.

A new eagerly anticipated project at MASARD has been their porridge project aimed at reducing child malnutrition rates in five villages. Our team spoke with several recipients of the nutritious daily porridge and were impressed at just how much it has transformed children's lives. One mother to a six-year-old told us:

**“My girl was very small and thin for her age. All she was doing was lying around all day sleeping. She couldn't get up and go to school, she was very weak. A lot of the time, she had a fever, and she rarely ate (once a day). Since the porridge, she gets hungry now and has gained weight and an appetite. She loves taking her porridge with milk, twice a day. Now, she plays well and has the energy and concentration for school. She also speaks more and loves playing with toy cars and ball with her best friend Sanjo.”**

The porridge project has improved the health and wellbeing of 75 children in 2022. We have approved the project to support a further 100 children in 2023.



Porridge project participant

## DISABILITY PROJECT

CRUSADE's disability project is aimed at helping some of the most marginalised people in rural India. SOTE currently support 58 groups for people with disabilities with a total of 610 members.

We met two groups named, 'Love' and 'Achievement' made up of 23 members. Of the 23 people, 20 had been supported in obtaining ID cards which are essential when applying for government allowances. Two young brothers who were both deaf and had learning difficulties are being support-

ed with their specialised education. One lady had undergone training and now runs a small business making flower arrangements for events. We also met a man with learning difficulties who had set up a petty shop.

It is CRUSADE's aim to give members the chance to be self-sufficient. Manakam, who runs the project with great passion and empathy, shared:

**“I wish I could rid these people of all of their needs. Day and night I think about them. Murray came to visit and he himself cried. We do not speak your language, but this**

**showed us that you feel the same way we do about these people. We thought you wouldn't understand as you are different to us. But we see the care and emotion. SOTE is a big service to us. Thank you.”**



Usha, aged 30, a group member

# SOTE STAFF HIGHLIGHTS OF VISIT

## Dr. John L Fernandes, MASARD CEO

“The staff and the people in the 15 villages, adopted by SOTE for its integrated development work, were looking forward to the much awaited visit to us of SOTE TEAM.

It has been more than two years since their last visit prior to Covid. Having saved so many lives during the Covid time, with the massive support provided to the people by way of cooked food, groceries, medical assistance, etc. the staff and the thousands of people who received help from SOTE, just wanted to say a BIG THANK YOU to Murray and his team who worked so hard to ensure that lives were saved.”



John at Ashagram compound

## Peter Dhanapal, CARE CEO

“Staff and all the children at CARE are very happy and we all eagerly awaited of your visit. Your visit gives us enthusiasm to work hard. We are grateful to have you in our project. Your team has listened to all the thoughts we have shared. Your visit has given us the motivation to keep pushing forward and make a difference in the begging community. Without your support we could not manage the project. The words can't fill to express our gratitude of your support and care.”



Billie, Janet, Murray and Peter

## Janet Elisita, SOTE Trustee & Management team

“What struck me the most this year was the change I saw in some of the women. I thought they were more self confident and willing to speak in a group of their challenges and successes.

When I said this in a final staff meeting two young women staff members said they had noticed these changes in themselves as well, and now they were aware of taking more initiatives and being more assertive in their own families and communities.”



Janet addressing Women's Self Help Group members at CRUSADE

## Billie Calland, SOTE Trustee & Management staff

“Going back to India after three years felt like coming home. All NGOs and their fantastic staff feel like family. My highlights were seeing how much progress and experience has tightened bonds between workers and the villagers they are supporting, especially among the females.

Covid and the struggles they have faced over the last two years have highlighted the amazing support our partners give.”



Billie and MASARD Social Worker Elizabeth

## Jothi Ramalingham, CRUSADE CEO

“CRUSADE staff team and me were privileged to have SOTE for four days for field level update of the major programmes. The team met the key staff at the end and shared their feelings. To quote Janet “I am overwhelmed by the confidence and courage displayed by women especially in this visit”. Murray felt “the visit was invigorating and inspiring”. CRUSADE team is greatly obliged by the feedback and it was reassuring.”



Final team meeting (Jothi second from left)

## Lena Lang, Freelance Admin & Marketing SOTE

“More than anything, I enjoyed meeting new and familiar faces during our visit. The teams implementing projects in South India are made up of wonderful, kind, and completely dedicated staff. They are truly inspiring people.

Watching the CARE team interact with sponsored children, witnessing the stature of CRUSADE staff among local governments, and enjoying a lunch with the impressive women at MASARD, are a few moments I cherish. We could not do this work without the people on the ground. And the people on the ground are marvellous.”



MASARD Gardener and RDC cleaner, Kasthuri, with Lena

# THE SOTE 500

Would you find it too great a challenge to raise £500 to change the lives of poor families in the rural villages of Tamil Nadu; struggling with poverty, deprivation, and community neglect?

With 'The SOTE 500' you can find out just how imaginative, creative, and resourceful you are and feel the joy of changing lives in dramatic ways.

You could inspire your friends, family, workplace colleagues or members of your social groups, clubs, or places of worship. Come up with an idea, make it fun, make it creative and make it happen and discover just what you are capable of.

As well as the knowledge that you have improved other's lives you will receive details of how the money will be spent as well as an annual report on progress with case studies.

Choose from below what your £500 will fund:

**Provide highly nutritious porridge mix for 6 malnourished children for an entire year.**

**Fund two awareness training programmes for adolescent girls**

**Fund 8 Wellness Camps for village women**

**Provide life skills training for 350 adolescents**

**Fund a part-time village health worker / first-aider for a whole year**

\* Full information on each project is available. (If you would like to simply donate £500, the project will be initiated asap)

**Feel challenged to change lives? Feel excited at what's possible with £500? Great! Then contact Murray on 0116 2766439 or at [murray@sote.org.uk](mailto:murray@sote.org.uk) to get your challenge started.**



Supporter Edward raised over £500 walking National Trail Offa's Dyke 177 miles!

## VISIT SOUTH INDIA WITH SOTE!

Join us on a journey through South India and interact with local people. Our partners and 35+ years experience in India means we can offer a unique insight into rural communities and take you on a trip like no other!

**Our supporters visit is running Wednesday 31st Jan to Wednesday 14th Feb 2024. From £1,400 per person.**

Price including 14 nights accommodation sharing a room with breakfast, airport transfers, transport, and a volunteer leader throughout the visit. Flights not included.

The SOTE supporters visit starts in Bengaluru (Bangalore) Airport from where you will be transported to a hotel close to MASARD, one of our partner organisations, for a three-night stay. This is followed by a one-day relocation drive to Chennai, where we will stay for four days, during which we will visit CRUSADE, another of our partner organisations, as well as

seeing some of the sights. Then we will drive south to Pondicherry, also known as Puducherry. The centuries of French rule gave this town a unique Indo-French atmosphere, preserved in the architecture and relaxed lifestyle.

Here we will visit places of interest and you will have time to explore this charming town and its beaches. The next destination is Mamallapuram (Mahabilipuram), a popular tourist resort, where we will have a guided tour of some of India's oldest Hindu temples dating back to the 7th century AD.

From there, we will visit CARE Foundation the last of our partner organisations. Finally we return to Chennai in order to take a morning departure flight from the nearby airport.

Itinerary online:  
[www.sote.org.uk/visit-india](http://www.sote.org.uk/visit-india)  
**Email [murray@sote.org.uk](mailto:murray@sote.org.uk) as soon as possible to find out more!**



SOTE visitors at temple



Supporter Vicki with CARE children

## HELP US

### SPONSOR A CHILD: £18 a month

Donations support the development of a child, as well as funding projects that their families and village communities can access. By sponsoring a child, you will help to ensure that mobile health clinics, skills training, and livelihood incentives can continue for several years in rural villages.

Waiting list regularly updated online:  
[www.sote.org.uk/child-sponsorship](http://www.sote.org.uk/child-sponsorship)

### SPONSOR A VILLAGE: £1,800 per annum

Village sponsors provide mid to long term assistance to deprived rural villages with a population of between 2,000 to 4,000. Donations enable SOTE's core interventions, as well as specialised support.

[www.sote.org.uk/village-sponsorship](http://www.sote.org.uk/village-sponsorship)

### ENVIRONMENTAL SPONSORSHIPS

Trees and kitchen gardens provide food, shade, income, and herbal remedies to rural poor families as well as help to mitigate the effects of climate change on the local area. Offset your carbon footprint with a one-off or regular donation and help us continue our environmental programmes in India.

[www.sote.org.uk/tree-planting](http://www.sote.org.uk/tree-planting)

## 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 legacy).

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.

## SIGN UP FOR A FREE WILL!

Do you want to create a will without the need for a solicitor or complicated paperwork? If so, an organisation called FreeWills.co.uk could be the answer.

Free Wills is a service that creates for users a basic will, free of charge. If you want to, you have the option to include a donation to Salt of the Earth from a charity drop-down menu. From there, you can state what you wish to donate in the event of your passing. We have signed up for the service ourselves and found it very simple to use.

Visit [www.freewills.co.uk/charity/sote](http://www.freewills.co.uk/charity/sote) to get started!



@saltoftheearthcharity | [www.sote.org.uk](http://www.sote.org.uk)

## NEW ETHICAL GIFTS

We have amended our ethical gifts to best help the communities we support in rural India. To purchase an ethical gift, please visit  
[www.sote.org.uk/ethical-gifts](http://www.sote.org.uk/ethical-gifts)

### Newborn Baby and Mother Package - £22.50

Donate a baby mosquito net, cotton towel, clothes, nappies, baby oil, herbal medicines, and sanitary products.

### NEW! Fruit tree for a family

Provide a family with nutritious food & income.

### NEW! Crisis food kit for a family - £17.50

Feed a family of 4-5 facing crisis, for an entire month.

### NEW! 3-month supply of nutritious porridge - £20

Support our porridge programme & help a malnourished child.

### Medical check for an elder - £15

Pay for an elder to have a full medical check-up.

### NEW! Kitchen garden starter kit - £25.00

Donate seeds and fencing to a rural family.

## GENERAL DONATIONS!

Please send your donation via bank transfer to:

**Salt of the Earth**  
**CAF Cash account number:**  
**00007729**  
**Sort code: 40-52-40**



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

Or visit [www.sote.org.uk/donate](http://www.sote.org.uk/donate)

You can also donate online by scanning the QR code with your phone camera!

## OUR PROJECTS

- Water
- Environmental
- Livelihood
- Women's Empowerment
- Health
- Child Development

**SALT OF THE EARTH - Registered Charity 328328**

Published by Salt of the Earth

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Photos, words & design by Lena Lang Digital

Printed by Novaprint [www.novaprintltd.co.uk](http://www.novaprintltd.co.uk)