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SALT OF THE EARTH
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saltseller

News from South India



OUR EMERGENCY FOOD APPEAL HAS RAISED OVER £50,000

The appeal that we launched on 28th March to provide emergency relief because of the Indian government's total lockdown has now reached **£53,434**. This remarkable figure is double the amount that we reported in our June newsletter and it is a great tribute to the generosity and concern of our supporters.

We have distributed £48,922 to our three partner organisations leaving £4,512 which we are holding for anticipated further requests. By far the biggest expenditure has gone on providing food for over 200,000 meals to those who were most in need. Face masks, soap and sanitisers were also provided in the initial stages. Latterly supplementary education has been provided in some villages to combat the closure of all schools. Details of what has been provided is included in the reports from our three partner organisations on pages 4-8.

Our three partner organisations performed magnificently in the most difficult of times. The task they were presented with was truly unprecedented. The Indian government gave only four hours' notice of a country-wide total lockdown. Overnight this act deprived the villagers of their jobs, income and ability to get food other than from the government ration shops. Schools were closed, all forms of public transport were shut down and everyone was confined to their homes.

All our partners had long established part time staff who lived in the villages they served. This proved invaluable in the selection of those who were most in need of help and, most importantly, in the distribution of food. Previously developed good relationships with local government officials enabled transport regulations to be waived without which relief supplies

could not have got through to the villages.

The financial backing of this charity enabled our partners to respond rapidly which prevented widespread hunger and perhaps starvation for thousands of disadvantaged people of all ages. In addition, they were able to distribute preventative measures and information and their very presence in the villages was a great source of comfort. Incidences of infections and mortality have, mercifully, been low, and there can be little doubt that, without these efforts, the toll would have been greater. Your generosity has made an enormous difference to a great many people.

With much thanks

Murray Frankland
Founding and Managing Trustee

THE CURRENT SITUATION AND BEYOND

Seasoned international observers have concluded that India, like many still developing countries, felt that it had little choice but to prioritise re-opening the economy and accept the risk of surging coronavirus infections. So far, that risk seems to be working as infections have already peaked. However, most epidemiologists believe that another peak is inevitable in the coming winter months. The seasonal increase in pollution and the imminent busy festival season, where many people travel and mix, will only add to the risks of this happening.

Life is returning to something like normal in the CRUSADE and MASARD areas of operation with employment approaching pre-pandemic levels although there are still pockets of real hardship. The community of beggars that our third partner CARE supports is still struggling. Gainful employment is even more difficult to find and begging opportunities are much reduced due to some restrictions still being in place for festivals and temples. We will be redoubling our efforts to help the community find more alternative and sustainable sources of income.

A government decision has yet to be

made to re-open schools and colleges although one is expected soon. The damaging effects of depriving young people of formal education for over 7 months is incalculable regardless of its standard. With our funding our partners have had success in providing food to alleviate the loss of free school meals to many of the children. Great efforts have been made to encourage children to carry on learning in the villages. However, there is little doubt that this loss of formal education will be very difficult if not impossible to recover and there is real concern that some children will never return to school. Education is an area that we will be looking to provide help with in the coming year.

Our regular programmes concerning health, environmental protection, water, women's development and income generation are now back on track.

Tree planting is in full swing with the onset of the winter monsoon which is said to be above normal. This is good news for water conservation and farming.

Unfortunately, none of us at SOTE will be able to visit the projects this coming January to discuss and agree projects. We do however have a close working relationship with all the partners and are in good regular contact with them. Let us hope that the villages that we support will continue to escape the worst of this pandemic and that it will be possible to make visits again in 2022.



Sapling distribution with social distancing

CAN YOU HELP US WITH OUR WORK?



Supporter Joan raised £175 by selling home-made jams!

Like all charities we have experienced a reduction in income this year which, fortunately, we have been able to offset with a legacy and a one off large donation. This loss of income has been mainly brought about by an inability to run social fundraising events such as sales, garden parties and curry evenings as well the annual visitors programme to see the partner organisations in Tamil Nadu. Despite the latest promising news about vaccines we believe that we will suffer a similar reduction in income in 2021.

We are increasing our on-line marketing and funding applications to charitable trusts, but success here cannot be guaranteed. More and more charities are chasing less and less money and it is unlikely that we will be able to make

good all of the estimated £20,000 shortfall.

What would help SOTE most of all is an increase in our regular income. This would enable us to maintain the excellent programmes that we are unable to get external funding for. These programmes are wide ranging and include

If you do feel able to help us in a regular way please complete the section of the brochure which is included in this mailing and send it to us. Alternatively you can go to our website and set up a Direct Debit there at www.sote.org.uk. If you already have a Direct Debit with us and would like to increase your donation just email us with your intention and we will do the rest.

supplementary education (even more important now that so much schooling has been lost), environmental protection, women's development and health.

If you would prefer to further target your regular donation this can be done through our child sponsorship or tree planting schemes. Full details and how to apply are also available on our website.

Despite most of our social fundraising being cancelled, some of our supporters have still managed to

find ways of raising money. These include making and selling beautiful face masks, running events online and selling homemade jam locally. You may well have other ideas. One popular way is being sponsored to achieve something. Sir Captain Tom captured all our hearts with his exploits and is a superb example.

Let us know if you would like to do a sponsored event or any other fundraising event as we have some experience in this field and we could also give you some publicity! We would also love to hear of any



Supporter Sue has raised £250 and counting! From sales of her home-made masks

VIRTUAL MARKET

Support small businesses in the UK that support our projects in India

We have launched an online 'Virtual Market' in the absence of our annual Christmas sale event. The market is on our website and showcases fantastic creations, cards, aromatherapies, jewellery, and crafts, from small businesses around Leicestershire. Commission a painting, find a unique hat, or buy gorgeous fudge for a chocolate loving loved one! By following the instructions and buying as a SOTE customer, you can ensure that a portion of your payment comes back to us. Our dedicated fundraisers are excited to be launching the event online and expressed:

"We could all do with some light and good cheer as the days get shorter and normally at this time of year those of us in and around Leicestershire are busy planning for the much anticipated Salt Christmas Sale. Well, this year will have to be a little different, but we still want to benefit our communities in India and help our loyal stallholders who have given us so much support in the past.

In the same spirit, as you will miss out on our delicious homemade food at the sale this year, why not consider a small, general donation instead, using the donate button in the top right hand corner on the sote website. Or, please send a cheque if you would usually do so. We know it won't be the same, but if we all pull together, we'll be back bigger and better next year. Happy shopping!"



Limited time Only!
1ST DECEMBER -
21ST DECEMBER 2020
www.sote.org.uk/virtual-market
please read instructions online

HOW OUR NGOs HAVE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT THE RURAL POOR DURING LOCKDOWN

The number of positive cases of COVID-19 in the rural villages we support have been kept to a minimum in the past six months. Some villages have seen no cases at all and those that have, have been guided by our NGOs to ensure that the likelihood of spread is minimised. Each family in the villages has been kept up to date with information on preventative practices and government advice. We can confidently say that the presence of our partners in the area has positively impacted thousands of families in Tamil Nadu. We are pleased to present a breakdown of the work our partners have been implementing in our project areas, along with examples of how individual families have been supported.

CRUSADE

Of our three NGOs, CRUSADE oversee the largest population. The charity consists of Secretary, Jothi Ramalingam, and his team of experienced counsellors, social workers, administration staff and village animators. Due to their stature in Tamil Nadu, CRUSADE's team were able to connect with government officials and other NGOs to help maximise resources.

Jothi, states that: *"The spontaneous and instant financial support of Salt of the Earth has been invaluable, and motivated CRUSADE to strengthen and extend our relief work".* He explains that *"thanks to our field staff and volunteers who reside within the community of our project locations, we could make timely, first-hand assessments of real situations in the villages."*

EMERGENCY SUPPORT INCLUDED:

UTILISING VILLAGE ANIMATORS: Animators, employed through SOTE's women's empowerment scheme, assisted government officials in identifying the contacts of infected persons in villages and organised Coronavirus awareness days. The women shared information, organised food distribution, distributed medicines, identified families in need, orchestrated appropriate quarantining, and reassured the local people during difficult times.

FOOD AID: 2500 families in four blocks were supplied with rice, wheat flour, pulses, cooking oil, jaggery (local cane sugar) and legumes.

HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINES: As per national advice, CRUSADE distributed the immunity enhancing Homeopathy medicine 'Arsenicum Album-30' to more than 6000 families in 84 villages.



PREVENTATIVE EQUIPMENT: 4700 reusable cotton masks were made by Women's Self Help Group members (WSHG) and distributed to families, along with soap and information sheets.



INTERVENTION SINCE SEPTEMBER:

Since lockdown measures eased in September, CRUSADE have been working hard to reignite our climate change awareness programmes. The team have distributed 4000 seed packets, 850 herbal plants, and have sourced 1500 tree saplings for distribution. CRUSADE have also purchased 172 tree guards and 120 metre (12 rolls) of mesh fencing, as per WSHG members' request.

Mobile clinics have taken place in 13 villages, treating 408 people. Urgent medical care has also been provided to 19 elderly women's groups, providing health care and advice to 236 women.

Other projects are now starting up. Our study of anemia levels in adolescent girls has resumed, as health workers are able to take blood samples again. CRUSADE have also provided 13 new mothers with baby care kits, through Salt of the Earth's ethical gift scheme. The kits contain sanitary napkins, a mosquito net, towels, cotton clothing, baby powder, oil and soap. These are resources that pregnant women and new mothers are unable to claim from the government.

A final message from Secretary, Jothi Ramalingham:

"CRUSADE, on behalf of the people it works with, is extremely grateful to SOTE supporters and Trustees for all encouragement, support and solidarity in this crisis situation. We understand that the virus is equally virulent in Europe and in other nations as well, and thank you for your generosity."

'CRUSADE's graceful gesture helped me to survive'

CASE STUDY

Arputham, aged 55 years, is a rural poor member of 'the Malligai' (translating to 'Jasmine') WSHG in Natham village. Arputham lives in a makeshift hut alone.

She largely depends on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) that provides her with seasonal agriculture work for survival. The lockdown meant that the guarantee of work through the NREGP was ineffective. Transport systems and farms were closed and Arputham was left scared about her future, unable to make any money. She tells CRUSADE: *"I didn't have enough stock of provisions and my very survival was at stake. It was at this critical moment CRUSADE staff visited my home and distributed rice, cooking oil and pulses which helped me escape from hunger for the next two weeks. However, my anxiety continued as to how to cope with the lockdown period which kept extending. I thank God that CRUSADE staff again visited me and this time they distributed wheat flour, pulses, cooking oil, legume and jaggery (country sugar) at the doorstep"*.

"This helped me make healthy breakfast and I used up the wheat flour along with jaggery to prepare dosas. I was also given homeopathic pills from the organisation as a preventive measure from contracting infection".

"This graceful gesture helped me survive this lockdown and more importantly with Government ration and CRUSADE food aid, I did not have to look upon to anyone for my essential needs. I am ever grateful to CRUSADE for the timely help". Arputham is gradually returning to work and thanks Salt of the Earth for providing her with food, medicine and hope.



MASARD

without ration cards and government support, and provided services for the disabled, elderly and neglected families in the community, as well as the general poor population.

MASARD oversees 15 villages situated close to Hosur. MASARD CEO, Dr. John Fernandes, reports that as lockdown was enforced, widespread loss of livelihoods followed, with those relying on daily wage work being confined to their villages. These families had no savings and distress was building rapidly among the rural poor. The staff working in the rural villages worked tirelessly, despite a number of restrictions, to help provide immediate service to those most vulnerable.

John states: "Initially, when we started distribution of cooked food and grocery kits, there was heavy rush for it. The number of families in need was very huge, and there was no way we could meet the needs of hunger of all those people". With funds from SOTE's humanitarian appeal, MASARD's dedicated staff communicated with village animators to identify the most vulnerable members of the community. MASARD were able to identify those



EMERGENCY SUPPORT INCLUDED:

EDUCATION: One of the biggest casualties of the pandemic has been education. MASARD appointed teachers, who have run extra-curricular classes for our sponsored and other children in the villages. These children have been provided with a cooked mid-day meal, to ensure that their nutrition levels were maintained as much as possible in the absence of school.

All high school children in the villages have been provided with Rs. 250 (£2.50) to pay for the set up of TV cable boxes. Throughout lock-down, the government have been streaming educational programmes via the television. The donations enabled the children to buy a cable box and to access the classes. Village animators have been checking in with families, to ensure the boxes are being utilised for education.



Money for TV boxes



FOOD AID: 90,000 cooked meals (each enough to feed two people) were made in 'pop-up' kitchens. 550 grocery kits have been given to the most vulnerable members of the community. Each kit contained 25kg of rice, 5kg of Dhal, curry masalas and pickles, enough to feed a family of five for 30 days.

WATER: 3000 containers of purified water have been distributed, each container holding 20 litres of water.

MASARD are now able to resume long-standing programmes. John Fernandes and his staff thank SOTE supporters for their generosity and express:

"We have been able to effectively address the immediate needs of people and thus save the precious lives from hunger and starvation during the entire lockdown phase and beyond."

'My children will remember how SOTE saved them'

CASE STUDY

Fathima Begum, aged 45 years, is a rural poor Muslim woman from TMG KOTE village. She lives in a small hut with her four children, where they share one room and a small kitchen area. Fathima's husband is now estranged and she is expecting to give birth to another child in December. Before lockdown, she was earning a living by taking up irregular 'coolie' work, where she would work on building sites carrying materials.

During the restrictions, she was unable to attend work and earn an income. Fathima's family had no stock of any groceries, nor did they have any savings to buy it. They depended heavily on the once a day cooked meals MASARD were distributing in their village. This meal was the only meal Fathima and her children would have, until MASARD were able to collect and supply dry grocery kits. During lockdown, Fathima's family were provided with two lots of grocery kits, which they fed themselves with for two months. Now that restrictions have lifted, she is able to return to work.

Fathima tells MASARD: *'My children now remember very gratefully how SOTE's support saved them from hunger. We thank you greatly'*



CARE

CARE support some of the poorest families in Tamil Nadu. The 'Dalit' villages in which they work are home to begging communities that rely on collecting minimal funds outside local festivals and places of worship. In the initial stages of lock-down, CARE were unable to travel to the villages and could only provide support via a donated phone. The villages they work in are so remote that the families that reside there were unaware of the severity of the pandemic. Without CARE's support, they would have been completely unseen by government, and left unable to access food.

After a number of days, CARE were granted access by the police to travel to the people they support. CARE's first steps were to explain the situation, teach people the importance of hand washing, and urge people to clean their environments. These villages have extremely poor sanitation, so encouraging them to wash their hands with soap on a regular basis was a challenge for CARE staff. With a great effort from the CARE team, the communities listened their advice, believed their urgency and continued to practise basic hygiene throughout lockdown.

CARE CEO, Peter Dhanapal stated that: *"CARE foundation faced a very big challenge in the last seven months and had a new experience. Within a week people were facing famine. It was a big challenge for us to address this issue."*



Hygiene kits

EMERGENCY SUPPORT INCLUDED:

FOOD AID: In the initial weeks of lock-down, CARE managed, despite restrictions, to deliver food outside the villages. They were unable to enter, but dedicated their energy to ensuring people were fed. After three weeks, CARE received support from SOTE's humanitarian appeal, and received permission to travel freely. CARE provided rice, vegetables, pulses, and spices to all families they support for seven months.



A hand sanitising lesson in action

PREVENTATIVE EQUIPMENT: CARE provided soap, hand sanitiser, washing up liquid, toothpaste, and wash towels to families, along with sanitary materials for adolescent girls.



Food distribution

INFORMATION: Importantly, these villagers were kept up to date with the pandemic situation and were able to be 'seen'. CARE ensured that people's questions were answered, and that correct information was distributed. CARE appointed village volunteers and spread information through them, when staff were absent from the villages

CEO Peter has this final message for SOTE supporters:

"SOTE emergency funds support helped CARE foundation cope in this critical situation. SOTE support helped people to manage their famine in a crucial situation. This made community people and children to free from hungry. The food and sanitary materials have assisted the people in a healthy way.

This support helped people to manage physically and psychologically in significant period. CARE have shown resilience and dedication and send "heartfelt thanks to SOTE".

'SOTE rescued my grieving family from hunger'

Sagundhala, aged 40, lives with her husband Veeran and their two married children, along with two grandchildren, aged four and two. Tragically, Sagundhala's daughter, Selvi, took her own life by consuming poison at the beginning of lockdown, leaving her two young children in the home without a mother or father.

Sagundhala is physically weak, making caring for the children a challenge. On top of dealing with the distress of losing her daughter, she was afraid of lockdown and was unable to beg due to closures of public places. Veeran relies on irregular agricultural work and begs outside local festivals at weekends. Sagundhala had a small amount of savings through her Women's Self Help Group, but restrictions on travel made it difficult to obtain supplies. CARE provided an invaluable service to the family at this devastating time. The family received food for seven months and were updated regularly on government advice. It is difficult to say what would have happened to Sagundhala and her family without the intervention of CARE.

She has conveyed her thanks to SOTE donors and explains that we have "rescued her life from hunger".



CASE STUDY

Sponsorships

SPONSOR A CHILD: 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 the wider village community.

SPONSOR A VILLAGE: Sponsor a village for £1,500 a year. The aim of the scheme is to provide mid to long term assistance to a deprived rural poor village with a population of 2,000 to 4,000. This will provide core assistance, as well as specialised support to the village.

PLANT TREES: Plant trees to provide food, shade and homeopathic remedies to rural poor families. For 99p you can plant a tree and help offset your carbon footprint.

Our sponsorship programmes help fund our regular, long-standing projects. Please visit our Sponsorship pages on our website for more information

Help us Online

Our previous Facebook page (SOTEcharity), which has over 400 followers, cannot be accessed by our team. We have set up a new page which we would love you to follow (link below). On our new page, we post updates and photographs of the projects. In addition, our website has been developed recently and includes regular blog posts. Please follow us and share our updates, to help us in this new digital age.

Facebook Page!

<https://www.facebook.com/saltoftheearthcharity>

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 10 trees to 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

For more information about ethical gifts please visit www.sote.org.uk/ethical-gifts

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