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SALT OF THE EARTH
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Patron: Jeremy Irons



Saltseller

Focusing on Women



Janet and I hope to visit Tamil Nadu again in the New Year. It will then be three years since we last went and there are many new things to see and discuss with our three excellent partners.

At CRUSADE in addition to the large ongoing Health and Women's' Self Help Group projects that the charity supports we are looking forward to seeing in action the People with Disabilities (PWD) project that we have started to fund since we last went.

The life of ordinary poor villagers is hard enough but for those with some form of disability it is much tougher. Social stigma attached to disability can result in reduced opportunities in an already reduced job market. Limited government help is available but first the bureaucratic application process has to be overcome and this is often beyond the capabilities of

would be applicants. The project raises awareness, sets up and supports self-help groups and helps individuals get the government benefits to which they are entitled.

MASARD has set up two new projects with our funding. The first is a nutritional scheme aimed at 75 children between the ages of 5 – 8 who are suffering from malnutrition. The selected children are given a daily bowl of a special porridge which not only allays their hunger but provides them with the essential vitamins and nutrients they have been missing. The children are monitored for progress and they and their families are visited regularly and supported by the MASARD Community Health Workers.

The other new MASARD project is an imaginative addition to the health services that we already fund for

the 15 villages. Permanent medical testing facilities have been set up at MASARD's Rural Development Centre. The individual data obtained from patients can then form the basis of a personal video consultation with an appropriate specialist. This service is provided for a nominal payment and does not entail significant travelling costs and time.

It will be very good to renew the warm relationships with our three partner organisations after such a long absence and to catch up first-hand with all the developments that have taken place. Our only worry is that the current log jam of Indian visa applications does not clear in time.

Murray Frankland
Founding and Managing Trustee

THE RURAL WOMEN IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

Women are the backbone of implementing aid in the several hundred villages we support. We are passionate about training rural women, uplifting them, and providing the resources needed to break free from the cycle of poverty and under-representation.

MASARD and CRUSADE Animators are responsible for recruiting Women's Self Help Group (WSHG) members, overseeing local groups, implementing SOTE projects, and identifying people in need of support. Our NGOs listen to Animators regarding the needs of their villages, and request project funding from SOTE accordingly.

We currently **provide wages for over 30 part-time village Animators**. Regular training is provided to equip these women with the skills necessary to support their local people. Through your donations and our training, these women can find regular income away from agriculture and hold great pride in their work.

At mobile clinics Animators act as doctors' assistants, documenting cases and distributing medicines. In Adult literacy classes Animators motivate local women to study, and support them with their learning. In emergency cases they provide patients with first aid and set up consultations with our mobile doctors. During tree planting season Animators recruit and motivate village members to plant trees and ensure saplings are watered sufficiently. On school trips and at after-school clubs, they attend to the welfare of sponsored children and ensure they attend extra-curricular classes.

Animators demonstrate great eagerness for the work they do and care deeply about the welfare of people in their communities. We and our NGOs in South India are invested in these women, and these women are invested in their communities. Here are just a few of the women implementing SOTE support in rural India.



Animators distributing tree saplings



Archana teaching Adult Literacy Class



ARCHANA

Archana is the Animator for Naikanapanahalli Village. She is 35 years old and has two sons who are in education. Her husband is a chemist and runs a small local medical shop. Before she was a SOTE Animator, Archana was a housewife and felt unhappy, reporting that she rarely left her home. Now, she is not only an earning member of the family but is a leader in her community.

All programmes in Naikanapanahalli are run through Archana. She has been actively involved in first aid, literacy classes, mobile clinics, child, and village sponsorships and was of vital importance during the covid-19 pandemic. Archana has helped several women attend our Women's Refuge for domestic violence and has put families forward for our family counselling services. She assists two Women's Self Help Groups in her village and is proud to be a person that her community seeks support from.

"After I joined as a Village Animator, my life totally changed. My Husband and my family respect me more now".

MANGALA

Mangala is the active Animator for Pathakotte village. She is 32 years old and has a daughter and a son who are both attending school. She does all the work in the household and attends to her in-laws who live with her.

Inspired by SOTE's livelihood programmes, Mangala set up a small business which she has been running successfully. Her business provides chairs, tables, and tents for hire at functions and religious celebrations. She has been actively involved in every MASARD intervention over the past five years since the Animator programme began. She has helped with planting trees, managing self help groups, providing first aid, and ensuring sponsored children attend after-school classes.

"Being a Village Animator, I am very happy and satisfied as people look up to me as a woman leader in the village".



SELVI



"I am privileged to be an Animator. I am greatly respected now by my husband, and by my village".

Selvi has worked as an Animator in the remote village of Rampura for five years. She is 31 years old and studied up to 10th standard. She has two high-school aged children who are both enjoying education. In her remote village, there is little work available. Her husband works in agriculture and suffers from alcohol addiction.

Through SOTE's animator scheme, Selvi has gained self-confidence and has worked hard to improve her socio-economic situation. Selvi and her husband now tend to three cows and sell their milk for a small income. As well as this, she has recently taken on a lease for a small piece of land in her village where she is cultivating vegetables to sell.

Selvi has been vital in supporting women who suffer from domestic violence and has given victims the confidence to travel to SOTE's Women's Refuge for counsel. She collects data for tree planting, health projects, and village sponsorship and distributed food aid during the covid-19 pandemic.



Selvi tending to her vegetable crops



Mangala distributing Covid aid

CURRENT WOMEN'S PROJECTS

Transforming rural women into self-starters, innovators, and investors.



CRUSADE CEO, Jothi, with tailoring graduates

WOMEN'S SELF HELP GROUPS:

Women's Self Help Groups (WSHGs) offer a safe place for women to communicate, grow, save money and get access to credit. Each WSHG supported by SOTE has between 10 to 20 members who elect their own leader, secretary, and treasurer. In this they are assisted by the village animator. The groups meet regularly and cover topics such as savings, loans to members, women's rights and local issues that need addressing.

Once a woman joins a SOTE WSHG, she is encouraged to access incentives such as livelihood skills training, tree planting, medicinal herb cultivation, and cancer screening. Women remain in their groups for many years. We currently support over 500 WSHGs across Tamil Nadu, with new groups forming regularly.

REVOLVING FUND:

A generous one-off donation of £25,000 has enabled a Revolving Fund to be set up at CRUSADE for providing loans to WSHGs. Not all of the WSHGs have been approved by State Banks for loans so this initiative is important. Loans via WSHGs are the only way that poor married woman can gain access to credit which, in turn, can lead to great positive changes for them and their families.

Money from the fund has been given to 15 WSHGs who in turn have granted loans to 192 women members. The money is repaid over a 10 – 15 month period at the same rate as a bank would charge. This enables the scheme to grow in size and allow for inflation.

Valliammal, aged 39, is a member of Parijatham WSHG in Natham, Sholavaram. The group started in October 2020.



Nandhini serving batter to customer

She does not have any children, and recently adopted a boy named Surya from one of her relatives. After schooling, the boy wanted to join a nursing course, but the family could not afford it. Her group secured a loan of Rs 160,000 (£1,600) and Valliammal got Rs 10,000 (£100) which was timely to pay the fees for the nursing course. The boy is now part of a nursing course at Vel tech college.

Nandhini, aged 29, of the same group, utilised a similar loan to purchase a wet grinder which she uses to produce batter (used for making Idli/dosa) and sells the batter to make a net profit of Rs 1000/month (£10).

Naga, aged 50, has been a member of Roja group in Athip-edu village, Sholavaram, since 2005. The group was sanctioned a loan of Rs 130,000 and Naga has taken Rs 10,000 to further improve her milk business - rearing animals and selling milk locally. Including her own investment in the business, she makes a monthly income of Rs 7200 (£73).

Vani & Seetha:

Vani, aged 43, and Seetha, aged 49, are members of Parasakthi WSHG in Devadanam village. Their group has 16 members and began in 2004. The group has a common savings fund of Rs 7,50,500 (£), which all members regularly pay into.

The group was granted a loan of Rs 320,000 from CRUSADE in June 2022. Vani and Seetha combined their loans of Rs 20,000 each to start a food stall at a nearby temple in September 2022. They paid Rs 30,000 in advance to take on the rent of a shop and also paid for furniture, utensils, a gas stove and electrical equipment.

The women sell morning breakfast such as Idli, vada, tea and evening snacks to make a profit of Rs 400 per day. They have plans to expand their business by offering a lunch service and stocking more snacks in the near future.



Vani & Seetha serving customers at their food stall

GOAT REARING:

At CARE, who support the Landor begging community, we have funded a goat income generation scheme designed to overcome the need for begging. Over a year ago we paid for the purchase of 30 nanny goats and two billy goats to be distributed to ten families who had previously been trained in goat rearing. Each family are raising kid goats and, after giving back one kid goat to the scheme for the use of further families, sell the remaining kid goats. The scheme is designed to be self-sustaining and is growing.



Women tending to goats

WOMEN'S REFUGE & COUNSELLING:

Violence towards women is still prevalent in rural Indian communities. When rural women marry, they often move into their husbands home and experience violence from their partners and in-laws. Some situations can become so hostile, that women leave home and become ostracised, and some even commit suicide.

MASARD's Women's Refuge is set on 20 acres of rural land and continues to offer respite for over 200 women per year. Women visitors are given a temporary bed, counselling, clothing, and food plus the support of female counsellors. Our social workers listen to these women and work with families to ensure the women's experience is improved moving forward. The centre offers a stress-free and safe environment and is well-appreciated by its users.

In the 35 years since Murray first visited rural Tamil Nadu the role and importance of women has improved significantly with the help of funding from this charity. Women are now at the forefront of change in the over two hundred villages that we support. They now play a much more active part in the life of their family and village and are regularly elected in local government. Just as importantly they are a source of pride and example to their daughters.

Celia's 'Swan Song'

Celia Barden, a Trustee and long term supporter, has been organising a Christmas Sale in Leicester for the charity for the last 26 years (omitting Covid restrictions). The sale on November 12th was the last one with her in charge and what a success it was. Over £3,000 was raised with hundreds of people attending.

Thank you so much Celia for all your efforts over the years and we fully intend to carry on with the sale in the years to come. After all, it is now well and truly in the social calendar of so many people.



MEDICAL SERVICES FOR RURAL PATIENTS



Salt of the Earth has a long-standing commitment of providing access to healthcare in hard-to-reach rural villages. The villages we support are often situated several miles away from public roads and are far from government healthcare centres.

Our healthcare programmes implemented by MASARD and CRUSADE **directly benefit over 200,000** people living in rural poverty. CRUSADE focuses their attention on homeopathic and Ayurvedic remedies. Meanwhile, MASARD focuses on medicines. Both programmes have demonstrated significant improvements in the health and wellbeing of its patients and continue to be a highly sought-after service.

We are delighted to share progress on MASARD's healthcare incentives throughout 2022.

MOBILE CLINICS:

Before SOTE's mobile health service, villagers would often travel miles to their nearest government health facility. Villagers would often take a day off work for the long trip, missing out on vital wages. Once they reached the hospital, many reported that they experienced long waiting times, and some were turned away unable to 'bribe' healthcare staff for a consultation. Some patients reported that after making the journey they were turned away completely and most were unable to pay for medicines if they managed to see a doctor.

Through SOTE donations, MASARD provides **accessible health care in 15 rural villages**. Once every two weeks, each village is visited by a doctor carrying medical supplies. The doctor sits at a table in a local public building, accompanied by an animator and provides a free consultation service to whomever requires it. Our service does not discriminate and is open to all ages and religions.

On average, a MASARD **doctor will see 15-50 patients per village visit**. During consultations, patients are asked about their concerns and receive general health checkups including blood pressure checks. Patients are provided with medicines free of cost. Common ailments include fever, aches, fatigue, diarrhoea and common colds. The service is greeted by long queues and the local people are highly dependent on it.

The MASARD medical team is made up of two doctors, one social worker and fifteen animators. The animators, or 'Community Health Workers', each represent their village and assist doctors with distributing medicines and collecting data. Animators also provide first aid and support clients with aftercare.

Until 2022, MASARD operated their mobile clinic service with one doctor. Due to increased demand and funding, we have been able to pay for a second doctor which has enabled the team to expand their reach significantly. Dr. Sudhakar and Dr. Aswath visit villages on a rotating schedule which ensures we can honour regular visits. Both doctors are Tamil speaking and are well-received by the local people.



When MASARD organise larger general health camps, doctors from St. Peters Medical Research Facility volunteer their services. The doctors work with MASARD doctors as a part of the facility's community health extension commitments, which MASARD are proud to host.

CLOUD CLINICS:

MASARD launched a cloud clinic service in June 2022, to provide access to specialized healthcare professionals online. A room in the Rural Development Centre (RDC) has been dedicated to its service, hosting a computer connected to the Medi360 online service, a bed, and medical equipment. Patients are forwarded to the service by animators or a MASARD doctor, to access specialized online support from professional doctors around India.

The cloud clinic has two staff members dedicated to the service, and all 15 animators have been trained in supporting the project at a village level. Online consultations are more in-depth than that of the mobile clinic. Animators work with online doctors to take diagnostic tests, and support patients with after-care.



Animator administering Vitamin A tablet with parent

The service is unique to the area and has had to deal with some teething problems with its inception. One of the main challenges has been encouraging the rural population to access the service. Many villagers have only ever experienced healthcare from MASARD mobile doctors. So, encouraging patients to visit the RDC for more specialized support has seemed unfamiliar.

The Cloud Clinic offers high-quality consultations at a heavily discounted rate to the patient. Although there is a small charge for the online service, it is nominal compared to the loss of a days wages, travel expenses, and hospital costs. SOTE covers the staffing, medical equipment, building costs and basic medicines, but consultation fees are required to be covered by the patient to make the scheme sustainable. It has been a challenge for staff and doctors to persuade villagers that the best option for their health is to speak with a specialized therapist, rather than relying solely on mobile clinics.

Other challenges have included timekeeping and patients understanding the severity of their conditions. Patients are booked in at a certain time to meet with the online doctor and MASARD animator at the RDC.

MASARD anticipates that the service will become more popular as more rural people access it. As with many of our projects, this service is unique and new to the people it supports, and it can often take a few to influence the many. Mobile clinics rely on SOTE funding, whereas the cloud service has the potential to be self-sufficient. We applaud MASARD's ingenuity and appreciate their efforts in bringing new concepts to the people they support. We look forward to seeing this new concept develop.

24/7 AMBULANCE:

During India's second wave of covid-19, MASARD launched an ambulance service to transport rural covid patients to hospital. The ambulance service has continued and is now helping with a variety of emergency medical concerns. The ambulance is the only ambulance available in the 15 villages MASARD supports and is run by Animators on rotation. Local people report that they are very grateful for the continued service. Villagers share that they feel safer knowing there will be somebody to help them in times of crisis.

Vitamin A tablets & Deworming:

In 2022, MASARD organised two special medical camps for administering Vitamin A and de-worming tablets to close to **10,000 children**. The government has a similar programme, but children in our villages experienced difficulties accessing the incentive. MASARD took the initiative to contact 'Angels Organisation' in USA and requested aid. Angels Organisation provided the necessary tablets for 10,000 children and has committed to providing future tablets, free of cost.

"All of us here thank SOTE very much for the wonderful opportunities you are giving us to bring about qualitative changes in the lives of the most needy, and in this case, in the health care needs of the rural poor."

MASARD CEO, Dr John L Fernandes



Cloud Clinic at RDC

BECOME A SPONSOR

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.

Learn about children on the sponsorship waiting list online 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

PLANT TREES: for £2 a tree

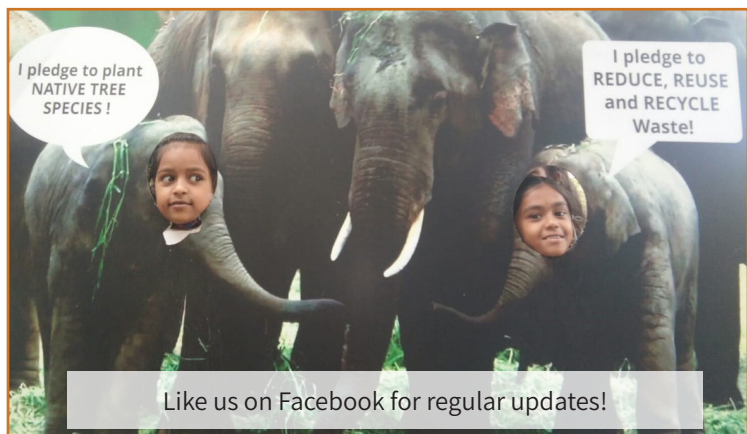
Trees and kitchen gardens provide food, shade, income, and herbal remedies to rural poor families as well as help to mitigate the effects of climate change on the local area. Offset your carbon footprint with a one-off donation to help us continue our environmental support.

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.



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ETHICAL GIFTS

Ethical gifts are beneficial items that help to improve rural people's health and livelihoods. To purchase an ethical gift online, please visit. *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 also receive a thick blanket for the monsoon.

Water Sawyer Filtration Kit - £25.00

Provide a family with safe drinking water

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 can 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 for more info!

OUR PROJECTS

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



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