

## Vaan Muhil Annual Report 2019 -2020

Vaan Muhil focuses on the welfare of adolescent girls, school going children, rural youth, working women , migrant labour and unorganized workers in the working villages. The thematic focus for its interventions revolves around bonded labour, child labour, right to education, right to health and women empowerment .

Vaan Muhil has been involved in the following four components in Srivilliputhur and Vembakkottai blocks in Virudhu Nagar district in 2019 – 2020.

- I. Adolescent Empowerment Programs**
- II. Livelihood Support Programs**
- III. Strengthening Community Support Groups**
- IV. Legal education and legal support**
- V. Networking and Collaboration**

### **I. Adolescent Empowerment Programs**

#### **1. Functioning of Community Resource Centres (CRCs)**

The CRCs in the working villages continue to be the learning centres for school going children in all working villages and these centres provide platform for them and to develop their potentials, getting actively involved in extra curricular activities. CRCs in the working villages provide meaningful spaces for the school going children and they get involved in a number of activities and these centres are helpful to improve their potentials and develop their personality. With a view of enhancing quality education and improving access to quality health and thereby protecting the adolescents from entering risk recruitments, the facilitators pay special attention to run



these centres well in their villages. While celebrating the important days, the children come to know about the leaders and see them as role models for them.

Special competitions are conducted for CRC children during Pongal celebrations and other festivals and prizes are distributed to them, with the contributions from local leaders and community members.



CRCs organize Special Summer classes for the children in their CRCs. Training in folk art forms and dances such as silambam, oyilattam and karagattam are given to them, with the help of available local resources. Elocution contest, essay and drawing competitions are organized and special sessions on yoga and English coaching are also conducted during the summer. Spoken English course is organized in a far villages and the children benefitted out of these summer coaching.

## 2. Health Camps for adolescent girls

Vaan Muhil project team organized nine medical camps for adolescent girls and women in working villages in Srivilliputhur and Vembakottai blocks in Virudhunagar District during the reporting period. A total of 860 benefitted out of these medical camps and medical teams from Madurai Meenachi Mission Hospital and Sivakasi Mathi Hospital conducted these medical camps. Special efforts were taken by the project staff to include more adolescent girls for these medical camps. Organizing medical camps for adolescent girls yields desirable results in bringing awareness among the target groups and improved access to health care facilities available in the areas and practical tips about personal hygiene and healthy food habits for better adolescent period. As a result of these inputs, many



adolescent girls are able to take more fresh vegetables, greens and cereals after the medical camp. Out of the beneficiaries, at least 10 adolescent girls have been referred to Madurai Meenachi Mission Hospital for further treatment.

### 3. Career guidance courses

A total of ten oneday career guidance courses for girls and boys studying secondary schools were organized in 2019 – 2020. 814 students attended these career guidance courses and benefitted out of the same. Motivational inputs and inspirational talks gave them the



confidence that they could shine well in their career in future. Study materials were distributed to those students preparing for TNPSC exams. The students were explained in detail about various courses available at the graduate level and interest was created among them to pursue higher studies and set clear

goal for their life. In addition, details about various scholarships available to the students (for different categories) were given to them so that these students could avail various Govt schemes. Inputs were also given as to what were the govt employment opportunities at Group 3 and Group 4 level by way of preparing for TNPSC exams.

### 4. Exposure visits and Summer Camps for AG girls and CRC children

Exposure visits were organized for adolescent girls and they were taken to Kanyakumari, Kodaikanal, Courtallam, Madurai and Tuticorin. These visits have been were very helpful to widen their thinking. Special camps were organized for the children on Yoga, drawing and painting, art from waste and spoken English. The students made use of their time in a more meaningful way and they learnt new things. These exposure visits and special camps kindled



new spirit in them and the younger minds to explore new avenues and thus developing an interest in their studies.

### **5. Strengthening of AG groups and refresher trainings / FBC for girls**

In a renewed attempt, the project staff take efforts to organize refresher trainings for adolescent girls on Film Based Curriculum and these have been helpful to strengthen the AG groups in the villages. The regular weekly meetings of AG groups have been useful for meaningful interactions among them and to learn from each other's experience, besides



knowing on the thematic focus area i.e, child rights, workers rights and women's rights. These girls do come out openly to speak about their problems and are willing to listen to others for solutions with open mind. Awareness has been created on mental health, menstruation, personal hygiene, mill work, sexual harassment and worker's rights during the weekly meetings. They also now discuss

with their parents openly and come out with concrete solutions for their problems. Their communicative skills have been developed and their confidence level has been increased.

### **6. Enrollment of vulnerable children and survivors**

18 vulnerable children and survivors have enrolled themselves to formal or non-formal education in 2019 -2020. Out of these 18, nine have been enrolled at the high school level, while the remaining enrolled at higher secondary level and seven were supported with local sponsors and contributions through the continuous engagement with the CRC facilitators. Besides this reenrollment of children and survivors, a total of 36 potential mill workers have been supported with educational assistance to pursue their studies during

this reporting period. Out of these 36 beneficiaries supported with educational assistance, 16 for 11<sup>th</sup> std, 7 for 12<sup>th</sup> std, 11 for college studies and one each for ITI and Nursing.

## **II. Livelihood Support Programs**

### **1. Linkages to Govt schemes and services**

A total of 398 beneficiaries received Govt benefits and bank loans during the reporting period and the benefits under various schemes include green houses, education loans, goat rearing, two wheelers, cattle loans, agricultural loans, rain water harvesting and soak pits in their houses, besides assisting the people to get Aadhar card, ration card, voter ID and income certificate. In addition, the project team worked on Social Protection Schemes for the people in working villages and totally 2098 individuals benefitted through these Social Protection Schemes (PMJJBY, PMSBY, Adult pension, PMAY and PMJDY) in 2019 - 2020.

### **2. Vocational and skill development courses**

A total of 23 deserving and interested adolescent girls have been supported with assistance for vocational and skill development courses during the reporting period. Out of these 23, three received support from All India Council for Technical Institutions for six months course, while the remaining 20 have been supported by Vaan Muhil project for skill development courses and of these 20, three are doing their courses in Maya Institute in Alangulam and 6 in Gomathi Institute, four in commercial Institute, Vanniyampatty and two in Achaya Tailoring Institutes, Srivilliputhur, three in Vidya Garments, Srivilliputhur and one in Jeya Institute in Alangulam.

### **3. Strengthening of Women Self Help Groups**

Out of the 55 women SHGs, in the working villages, 31 groups were able to receive Rs.42,60,000/- from the banks as group loans during Quarter 3 and Quarter 4. These bank



loans have been helpful to step up their small trades, which they had started earlier and useful to meet emergency needs such as education to their children. These loans have been a motivating factor for the members of women Self Help Groups to work as a group in the village. Besides credit linkages, inputs have been given on group formation, book keeping and linkages with financial institutions as women SHGs.



#### **4. Microenterprises Development**

30 deserving women have been supported by Vaan Muhil with financial assistance to start microenterprises in their own villages in 2019 – 2020 and the facilitators, along with the AG and CSGs played a key role in identifying the beneficiaries from the villages and the facilitators and CSG members have taken the responsibility to follow up these beneficiaries at regular intervals. These microenterprises include petty shop, goat rearing, snacks selling, flour vending, sale of fruits, sale of honey, masala powder, chicken rearing and tailoring / garments.

Out of these 33, who received loan amount from Social Welfare Department to start small trades, eleven received Rs.50,000/- each and five received Rs. 40,000/- each, while four received Rs. 30,000/- each and the remaining Rs. 20,000/- each. The beneficiaries are from Sankaramoorthipatty, Kongangulam, R.Reddiyapatty, Noorsahipuram, Nachiyarpatty and Sundangulam and the facilitators played a vital role in identifying the beneficiaries and to make arrangements to receive individual assistance from the Department. With this support, these individuals are able to earn additional income to their families and this access to alternative source of household income will pave way for reduction in bonded labour in the project area.

### **Positive Response from the Govt officials to the demands of the people**

As a result of the interface meetings organized in the villages by Vaan Muhil project team and rapport building with the Govt officials developed out of these meetings, the responses from the Govt officials to the demands of the people in the villages have been quick and their sensitivity to the issues in the rural areas has increased. When the project team along with CSG members from the villages approach the Govt officials concerned, their response is positive, encouraging and willing to oblige the requests / petitions from the villagers, be it infrastructural facilities or implementation of Govt schemes.

### **III. Strengthening Community Support Groups**

#### **1. Restructuring of CS Groups in the villages and inclusion of active members in the groups**

The project team started restructuring of Community Support Groups in the working villages, after taking stock of the activities of the groups, with the inputs from the facilitators and of the group members. Some of the inactive members have been removed from the groups and active members in the villages have been included. The new members get involved in organizing programs in the villages and assist the facilitators to strengthen CR Centres, and willingly contributing to the growth of the centres and the AG groups in the villages. These members meet the Govt officials, after the interface meetings, and do the follow up of the meetings in getting things done. They also follow up in getting social protection schemes and insurance for their villagers, which was appreciated by other villagers. Some of the villagers feel that the CSGs provide platforms for learning and sharing



about the development works in their villages. The discussion on worker's rights and child rights in the CSG meetings have been helpful to know about the statutory rights of the workers.

## **2. Increasing participation in Grama Sabha Meetings**

Concrete results could be seen after active participation of the group members in Grama Sabha meetings. People of Kothankulam realize that repair and cleaning of their village water tank, proper maintenance of link road, construction of Anganwadi centres in their villages were possible only because of their vocal representation in the Grama Sabha meetings and people from Keezhanmarainadu feel that they were able to have access to Panchayat Union office and get a number of benefits and this was possible because of their representations in the Grama Sabha meetings. People from K.Thottiapatty, Noorsahipuram, Sankaramoorthipatty, Sundangulam and Edayapottalpatty have similar experiences and they have gained either damaged road being repaired or getting water connections, proper drainage or drinking water facility in their own villages.



The dalits from Kurichiarpatty were earlier discriminated in the ration shop and palm oil and dhal were not distributed to them but strong representation to the panchayat during the Grama Sabha meeting have paved way to end this discriminatory practice and now they are provided with all provisions like others. Similarly Dalits of Athikulam were not allowed to use common toilets earlier, but now they are allowed, after their repeated reactions in the Grama Sabha meetings.

## **3. Awareness on Human Trafficking and the need for a comprehensive Bill**

Vaan Muhil organized a series of programs on human trafficking in 2019 - 2020, involving the community members, AG girls, college students and CRCs in the villages. In order to





reach out the rural masses, a cultural troupe performed folk dances, awareness songs and street plays, depicting various forms of human trafficking in different parts, dimensions of human trafficking, the impact of this heinous crime on the rural masses, the gaps in the

existing legislations and the need for a comprehensive bill to curb this menace. Conscious efforts were taken to involve the villagers and the college students in the educational institutions so that the message is taken at the grassroots level. Efforts were also taken to involve District Legal Services Authority in Virudhu Nagar district in the anti human trafficking issues.



#### 4. Taking up common issues as a follow up of interface meetings

Government officials and other stakeholders are invited for the interface meetings by the project staff so that concrete issues will be discussed in the meetings. The field staff, along



with concerned facilitators and CSG members planned for the meetings in advance, and identified key issues in the villages and prepared the people accordingly ahead of the meetings. The following were some of the key issues that have

been discussed in the interface meetings and demands were put forth to the officials concerned

- Need for separate ration shop for details in their area
- Construction of (Health) sub centre in their villages
- Proper link roads and better transportation facilities
- Construction of common toilets in the villages
- Better drinking water facilities
- Improved Library facility
- Repair of bridges between the villages
- Improved drainage facilities in the villages
- Better implementation of Government schemes in the villages
- Improved waste management in the villages

Besides, petitions are submitted to the officials for OAP pension, disability assistance, and bank loans for SHGs from the people. The officials are able to explain to the people about their role and the possibilities of the demands being met by them.

#### IV. Legal Education and Legal Support

##### 1. Legal Support Camp and Legal Support

The project team organized a special oneday legal support camp in Srivilliputhur in December 2019 for those affected mill workers to explain to them about the statutory benefits and the process as to how to avail those benefits from the Labour Department. The affected individuals, who participated in the oneday camp, raised their doubts as to the procedure. The resource person clarified their doubts and



assisted them in preparing their petitions to the mill managements and/or Labour Department. “ I had a good opportunity to take part in the oneday legal support camp and learnt many things about PF, ESI, minimum wage for mill workers. I understood that these

are the statutory benefits entitled to workers and this camp was very useful and I am happy to have attended” P.Krishnammal from Edayapottalpatty.

A total of 16 mill workers have been assisted to apply for their pending PF amount in their mills in 2019 – 2020. The project staff have supported the mill workers in preparing their petitions and provided assistance to approach the mill managements to receive their PF dues. Out of the 16 mill workers applied for PF dues, only five have received the compensation amount and the remaining workers are yet to receive their PF dues. Perumathal of Mettumullikulam received Rs.48,000/- and Ganapathiyammal of Koppianayakkanpatty received Rs. 93,000/-, while S.Ponnuchamy, N.Ramar and A.Karuppasamy from Kothankulam received Rs.40,000/-; Rs.10,000/- and Rs. 18,000/- respectively as their PF amount.

## **2. Fact Finding Reports**

The project staff undertook five fact finding missions in the project villages in 2019 – 20. Out of these five, three were suicide cases, one child abuse and one accident in the mill. Out of the three suicide cases, two were mill workers and one school going girl from the working villages. Of the two mill workers, one was of Assam Migrant worker in the mill and the other local worker from K.Thottiapatty. The interventions of the project staff, after collecting details and statements as part of Fact Finding Missions, explored ways to support the victims and their families in preparing complaints / petitions to the police station and exploring the possibilities of registering FIRs under proper sections and contacting the mills whether adequate compensation could be given to the victims and their families.

## **3. Workers support groups creating awareness on labour rights**

Workers support groups in Keelarajakularaman, Thombakulam and Kothankulam formed by Vaan Muhil staff are creating awareness among the working young women in the

villages on Minimum wage, working hours, overtime, health and safety issues and statutory benefits. They make use of the simple reading materials, which were prepared by Vaan Muhil project team. These workers support groups are eager to learn many things about labour rights.

## **V. Networking and Collaboration**

### **1. Engagement with mills to work for improved conditions and functional ICCs**

Efforts have been taken by NGO partners to meaningfully engage with the mill associations to work for better working conditions in Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar, Tenkasi and Madurai districts. The team members have met 15 spinning mills in Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar and Tenkasi districts and discussed with them about the working conditions in the mills. Out of 26 Mills in Tirunelveli and Tenkasi districts, 13 Spinning Mills reported to have functional ICCs and the remaining 13 mills have not formed ICCs. The mills show interest in forming Internal Complaint Committees (ICCs). The Project Coordinator has sent a formal letter to the District Social Welfare Officer, requesting her to give details about the ICCs in the mills.



### **3. Mapping of migrant workers**

The Campaign partners have collected details about Inter State Migrant workers in Tirunelveli and Tenkasi districts in 15 settlements. Out of 26 Mills functioning in these two districts, 11 mills have migrant workers and these details have been collected for all these 11 mills with regard to the number of migrant workers working there. Migrant workers

from Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha are working in these mills for several years and most of them are male workers.

After the lockdown period , most of them have gone back to their native districts, only in two mills these migrant workers are still working. The Campaign Coordinator stayed in touch with these two mills and to know the ground situation in the mills during this lockdown period. The mill owners of these two mills provided some relief materials to these migrant workers during the lockdown period. Most of the Inter State Migrant workers have not been registered with the Labour Department and they are not entitled to any statutory rights.

#### **4. Networking among Partners in the Districts**

The network partners are being updated at regular intervals about the progress and provided a space to interact with the other partners and the technical sessions during the meetings on SLSA and DLSAs, Functional ICC and Hostel registration and Trafficking of Persons Bill, were useful to the partners. The network members were asked to identify the critical gaps and major challenges in collaborating among the network partners at district and grass roots levels and they identified a few strategies to overcome these challenges at the local level. They also listed out a few best practices in the program interventions inside the mills and among workers.