

# A call for solidarity after the floods in Tamil Nadu

with a presentation of Areds

Sunday 19 February 2006, by [AREDS](#), [SAM Y L. A.](#) (Date first published: 19 January 2006).

Dear Partners and friends,

Greetings from AREDS and Samy.

After attending a seminar in Prague on the "Relationship Between Civil Society and Public Authority" and after my brief visits and various meeting in France, Spain, Belgium and Holland, I returned to India on November 21<sup>st</sup>. From the day of my return, Tamil Nadu had witnessed continuous rain and many parts resulted in devastating floods in almost all districts including Karur where AREDS office is located. All communications, electricity and public conveyance got cut and hundreds of houses either got completely or partially damaged. We were cut off from all possible means of mobility and communications.

All the staff and the members of all the people's movements viz. SWATE, DRALM, FPWLR and MAPOVI-TN had to rush to help the flood victims by taking the children and the aged to safer places. The immediate need was to find water and food. With all our might we were able to feed thousands of people for more than four days and thus keep them from starving.

It is once again the poor and the Dalits who fall victims to suffer most. Most of the residential areas of Dalits are located in low areas, which are easily prone to floods and water logging. Long history of discrimination, Dalits under the caste system and its discrimination effects in the denial of EcoSoC rights (Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) to the Dalits. AREDS' and efforts of various Dalit Movements and Action Groups' continuous struggle for the empowerment and Dalit Rights, though had given desired results and continue give results in various fields, still a long way to go. As many of us are involved in getting the EcoSoC rights to Dalits and fight against all forms of discrimination against Dalits, the events like Tsunami and Floods as this one in the form of natural calamity and disasters do not allow these vulnerable communities to move forward. Again and again the poor are the victims and get reduced of the little things they had gathered over a period of life. This is what we have been witnessing from the end of 2004 and through out year 2005. Karur district of other districts in Tamil Nadu has been experiencing the flood continuously for more than on month. The villages had been flooded already three times and now the breaches in the dams and reservoirs from other districts like Dindigul and Erode has to pass through Karur and again the agricultural lands are submerged in floodwaters, depriving the economic returns of small and marginal farmers. The days ahead for the Dalits landless agricultural laborers is going to be a hard one for there will not be any crop this year to harvest and to earn food grains as wages during the harvest season.

## **Flood damages in Karur district:**

- The recent rains and the flood in the rivers Amaravathi and Cauvery in Karur district have caused damages estimated at Rs. 68.98 crores- Rs. 689.8 million; (In Euro: 13,015,094)
- The district Administration seeks at least Rs 41.16 crores- Rs 411.6 million (Euro 7,766,037) for

immediate relief and repair works. The administration has submitted a demand for Rs. 27.83 cr/ Rs.278.3 million, towards permanent reconstruction endeavors.

- On the agricultural front the official report says close to 1,935 hectares of Paddy (Rice) 302 hectares of Sugar cane, 331.5 hectares of Banana, 4 hectares of peanuts and 127 hectares of other food crops have been damaged.
- Earthen roads stretching 289.75 kmts, which are the primary link roads for remote villages are damaged and requires Rs. 9.5 million
- A total of Rs. 6.35 million is required towards immediate relief for crops that come under minor irrigation in the village panchayats
- 23 water supply works, 190 streetlight and repairs to 10 public buildings have been damaged.
- Breaches in the rivers and canals had caused a total damage of Rs. 29.3 million
- In krishnarayapuram Panchayat, the loss is estimated to Rs. 40 million. 22 villages have been affected. 700 houses have been totally damaged.
- In Karur Taluk, 14,000 families have been affected.
- Kadavur Taluk requires Rs. 20 million for the relief works.

## **AREDS**

For nearly 26 years AREDS- Association of Rural education and Development Service is a non profit and non governmental organization founded in the year 1980, guided continuously by the conviction that Education should precede development, and development should be achieved by the small people by their conscious and collective numbers.

AREDS was registered in August 1981, has its own identity as grass roots based organization, and situated in the village named Rengnathapuram, which is 20 kmts from Karur.

## **Operational Area**

Grassroots activities:

Karur District, Tamil Nadu- India

Forum for Protection of Water and Livelihood resources to lobby and ensure right to water, food and safe guarding the livelihood resources- In Karur district

## **Networking and coordination:**

Peoples Governance Cell: Training and lobby initiative for Right to information and ensuring power to the grass roots democracy.

Woman MAPOVI-TN. Women Movement Against Poverty and Violence Tamil Nadu, A State level Grassroots women movement to intervene and lobby for the policies that ensures women share in development.

## **Advocacy and Lobby:**

Right to water and Food- EcoSoC rights of the Dalits and Marginalized.

33% of women reservation in the Parliament.

Fare share of the budget and benefits to the Dalits.

## **Vision**

“Towards one Humanity”

## **Mission**

Small People with Conscious and collective numbers can create another world.

## **Goal**

Organizing small people and building a Strong movement with economic, social, cultural and political alternatives.

## **Main Strategy and Approach**

Education and build organization is the central action and strategy of AREDS, which is also its main thrust. It is people centered and people oriented. Its implementation strategies are creating awareness among Dalits, who are economically alienated, socially discriminated by the caste system, rural poor and socially economically disadvantaged women by giving them the experience of working together as a community and building a society free from oppression.

Three levels AREDS interventions in the process of change

- A grassroots organization
- A macro level lobbying organization to ensure EcoSoC rights.
- A support service organization- trainings, research and documentation.

As a grassroots organization

- Education; Non formal education where life problems and the issues of the community is the syllabus to learn and become aware and to organize themselves to collectively address the issues towards finding a solution.
- Organization; Formation of Rural organizations viz. women, men Dalits and women in to sangams, federations and to peoples movement.
- Theatre and folk arts are some the means which are used in the education programme.

## **District Movement:**

- Youth Organization- (Men) peoples development Movement- PDM
- Women organization- (Women) Society of Women in Action for Total Empowerment-SWATE. A district level Women Movement which has 15,000 grassroots women as its members who have their own savings and credit programme and various alternative economic programmes to sustain themselves both socially and economically.
- Dalit organization; DRALM- Dalit Rights Awareness and Liberation Movement.
- Farmers Associations
- Karur District labour Union- KADALU: an organized labour union to fight and demand for the labour rights and right to work.

## **District level networking movements;**

- Forum for protection of water and livelihood rights
- Campaign for food and livelihood rights- campaign for distribution land to dalit landless agricultural laborers and campaign against giving the livelihood resources to the companies which commercialize the natural resources other wise which is freely available all communities.

## **State Movement**

Women MAPOVI-TN- This is a grassroots women movement having a membership of 125,000 from 22 districts of Tamil Nadu State, which lobbies and campaigns for the policies and programmes in favour of women and with gender equality and gender equity.

### **As a macro level lobbying organization**

AREDS organizes number of workshops and seminars to NGOs and Peoples organizations and to the bureaucrats. It also organizes regional level consultations, seminars and workshops to help people movements to take up collective lobby work for policy change state level people's movement networked to lobby on the national issues at national level such as 33% reservation, Dalit rights, Human rights, campaign, Environmental degradation, Woman's poverty, and rights etc as well as international levels.

### **Member organization in national and international networks;**

- NAWO- National Alliance of Women Organizations; NAPM- National Alliance of People's Movement; NCDHR- National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights; WIPSA\*
- WMW - World March of Women 2000; ASF- Asia Social Forum, WSF- World Social Forum; Zij ann Zij Belgium.
- VODI- Voice of Dalit International UK; Gender and Globalization.

Part of International conferences- Education for Global Alternatives, Globalization and spirituality, Development and Civil society, EcoSoc rights, Dialogue of civilizations and peoples development in the context of religious fundamentalism and Economic globalasization.

### **As a support service organization**

#### **1. Facilitation**

AREDS facilitate the people's movements to grow into strong vibrant movement that will wield people's power to influence the political change in favour of the deprived sections. This endeavor is taking place in the context of the globalization where people cannot protect themselves from the increased levels and dimensions of exploitations and deprivation.

#### **2. Trainings**

AREDS as a facilitating organization gives number of trainings to other NGOs. People's movements on the concepts Decentralized people's plan in relation to Local bodies, Right to information, Budget Analysis, Gender.

Trainings given to:

- NGO'S staff, Pos
- Elected members
- Bureaucrats
- Overseas organizations

Thematic trainings are

- Human resource development and organizational management training.
- Community organization training
- Panchayat Raj training
- Training on micro credit.
- Theater Training- Playback theater, street theater

- Trainers training Programme
- Training for facilitation of movements
- Movement building
- Capacity building

### 3. PGC- People's Governance Cell

PGC is an unit of AREDS, initiated ensure grassroots democracy, to ensure right to information through local governance in Tamil Nadu. Now it has extended to PGC- India which is involved in strengthening local governance in Tamil Nadu and neighboring state in collaboration with southern states- Kerela, Karnataka, Andra Pradesh.

- Training- Pre and post poll training and follow-ups, capacity building, training to update PRI information and amendments.
- Campaigns, workshops, conferences - with Bureaucrats, political parties.
- Newsletters, special issues.

### 4. Research, Documentation and Publications

- Documentation and publication has been a crucial in all the development interventions of AREDS. The publication has greatly helped in soliciting district and state level support o many issue based mass actions.

#### Publications

- "one year after Durban" (English and Tamil)

#### Documentation

- Documents on policies, State GOs
- Thematic books, journals, articles

#### Media productions

Silent cry, Namma oru Panchayat, Pon vidial

#### Research undergoing

- Study on the impact of globalization on women's livelihoods
- Study on liquor policy.

Through its various interventions with the people in concern in Karur district have built up the economic, social and cultural rights. We had started the development process of these communities through education and organization which led to the formation of sangams to federations and then to various peoples movements viz. SWATE which has 15,000 women of grassroots as its members engaged in creating economic and political alternatives within the means they have. 26 years ago AREDS started everything from scratch, from a village, which was black listed by the local administration because most population of this village was of Dalit community, whose poverty and social environment kept them away from the reaches of all government programmes and subsidies. When these people started to demand for their fair share this was attitude was not tolerated by the administration and hence they were black listed and treated as dangerous area. It is in this very village AREDS started its work and activities and to day, the very village has become a model village.

AREDS' initiatives had resulted in the formation of various self supportive peoples movement to the extent it has paved way for the formation of the first Grassroots women Movement against poverty and violence which has got 120,000 women belonging to 22 districts of t eh state of Tamil Nadu.

It is because of these movements and support that we are able to address and support the victims of Flood in providing relief viz. Food clothing and medical

We had built in confidence and self esteem among women and among Dalits to demand fair share of the state in their development. Through the rights' approach and struggle the people in concern in the district have acquired alternative skills to meet their socio Economic and cultural rights.

The very assets that have been grown over a period through AREDS interventions for these years has been destroyed by this flood.

From October 29<sup>th</sup> till to day all the staffs of AREDS and Integrated people's movement personnel are engaged in evacuation, relief and rehabilitation works. With in our might we are trying to help the people affected with food and medical services.

Of the total number 14,000 families that are affected by this flood in Karur; that need help to reconstruct and find a permanent solution to their livelihood identify 1,169 houses.

The most number of houses that are completely destroyed belong to Dalits numbering 964.and partially damaged viz, loss of two walls, and major crack in the whole building, which can be repaired.

AREDS proposes to construct and repair the Dalit houses, which is their only asset. This will help them to sustain their long struggle and to continue to get their fair share in the socio economic and cultural programmes and policies of the state.

The houses will be constructed with brick and cement mortar  
The roof will be tiled.

**The estimated financial assistance required to undertake this flood victim's reconstruction work is:**

Providing shelter for Dalit families: 964 Families @ Rs. 40,000 = Rs. 38,560,000 Euro: 727,547

To repair the partially damaged houses: 205 families @ Rs. 10,000 = 2,050,000 Euro: 38,679

We request friends and partners who join in our effort to help the flood victims of Karur especially the Dalit families and the rural poor to come out of this grave situation and help reconstruct the lives and the livelihood means and thus give the sense of hope. As the struggle of the Dalits and the rural poor has taken years to build their future but has taken few seconds to loose everything.

We are in a situation bringing hope to these people to sustain their struggle by  
"From the ashes of destruction let us create roses of success."

Kindly contribute generously and it is another challenge for the humanity of the world to reach out the unreached.

**Your contribution could be sent to;**

AREDS  
Association of Rural Education and Development Service  
Renganathapuram P.O.,  
Krishnarayapuram Taluk,  
Karur district  
Pin- 639 108, TN- India

Bank details;

Indian Overseas Bank  
Account number: 5180  
SWIFT Code: IOBAINBBOOI  
SWIFT Number: 8520190

Bank Address: Lalapet  
Krishnarayapuram Taluk,  
Karur district  
Pin- 639 108  
Tamil Nadu  
INDIA.