

ANNUAL REPORT-2022-23



Submitted By
VOC Rural Development Centre – VOCRDC
Vadipatti, Madurai,
Tamilnadu, India

Message from the Executive Secretary

Dear Friends, and Supporters,

As we reflect on the pages of our 2022-23 Annual Report, I am humbled and inspired by the profound impact we've collectively achieved. VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) has embarked on a journey of transformation, touching lives and leaving an indelible mark on the communities we serve.

The ongoing construction of 50 houses in Vadipatti and Sholavandhan signifies not just the construction of walls but the building of dreams, security, and hope. To Women First International, USA, your unwavering support has been instrumental in turning these dreams into reality. Your generosity echoes in the laughter of families soon to find solace under their roofs.

Educational Material Distribution, made possible by the Shamdasani Foundation - Hong Kong, has lit the flame of knowledge in the hearts of 50 primary school children. In their hands, we see the promise of a brighter, more empowered future.

Our awareness programs, tackling HIV/AIDS prevention and environmental stewardship, have ignited conversations, fostered unity, and sparked change. From cycle rallies to human chains, every initiative is a step towards a healthier, more aware community.

As the superstructures of 50 houses rise, we look ahead to August 2023, envisioning not just completed structures but transformed lives. Our Livelihood Training for Women and Girls continues to be a beacon of hope, offering not just shelter but pathways to sustainable livelihoods.

To our dedicated team, partners, and the resilient communities we serve, thank you for your unwavering commitment. Together, we stand at the forefront of change, weaving a tapestry of empowerment, dignity, and resilience.

As we turn the pages of this report, let's carry the stories, successes, and challenges into the future. The journey continues, and with your support, VOCRDC will persist in creating a world where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

Gratefully,

Mr. R. S. Ramasamy
Executive Secretary
VOC Rural Development Centre

Annual Report-2022-23- VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC)

Overview:

In the fiscal year 2022-23, VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) continued its commitment to sustainable development and community empowerment. Through various projects, we aimed to address critical issues affecting the lives of individuals in our target areas.

Key Projects Implemented:

1. Safe Drinking Water Initiative:

In many parts of the world, especially in developing countries, water-borne diseases pose a significant threat, leading to the highest causes of death. Access to safe water is crucial in reducing water-related diseases and improving overall health. The villages in Vadipatti block, Madurai district, Tamil Nadu, India, faced challenges due to non-access to safe drinking water, aggravated by the denial of this basic right to Arunthathiyar women by dominant castes. To address these issues, VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) initiated the project to provide safe drinking water to these marginalized women.

NEED ASSESSMENT: The targeted community for this project was the Arunthathiyar Caste/SC Dalits, engaged in unorganized work, agriculture, stone quarries, mining, and other challenging occupations. Women, especially those heading families, faced daily struggles for their basic needs, including drinking water. After careful analysis, VOCRDC identified 50 vulnerable Arunthathiyar families for intervention.



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION: With the support of SELAVIP INTERNATIONAL, VOCRDC successfully implemented the project, 'Safe Drinking Water to COVID-19 Arunthathiyar Women.' Ten borewells equipped with submersible motor pumps, overhead Syntax water tanks, and tap fittings were installed to serve 50 families, benefiting 280 individuals. The project was completed within the scheduled six months.

ASSOCIATES (ENTITIES INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT): The major entities involved included the 50 beneficiary families, project engineer and team, local Women Self-Help Group (WSHG) members, and the panchayat administration. An orientation program informed beneficiaries about SELAVIP's support, fostering a positive collaboration.

GENERAL TYPES OF SOLUTIONS THAT WERE BUILT:

- 10 borewells
- 10 submersible motor pumps
- 10 overhead Syntax water tanks
- 10 platforms for tank installation
- PVC pipeline connections with tap facilities to 50 beneficiary houses

LOCATION OF THE PROJECT: Villages of Vadipatti block, Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, India.

FINAL NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES: 280

FINAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES: 50

TIME OF EXECUTION (MONTHS): 6

PARTICIPANTS/BENEFICIARIES: The project benefits 50 Arunthathiyar families, particularly women, totaling 280 individuals. The safe drinking water facilities alleviate the daily struggles these women faced, impacting their families positively.

FOCUS, APPROACH, AND STRATEGY: The focus was on holistic development, specifically quenching the thirst of Arunthathiyar community members. Community participation was a key strategy, involving beneficiaries in project activities from the outset.



RESULTS:

- 10 borewells dug
- Submersible motor pumps installed
- Overhead Syntax tanks installed

- Platforms constructed for tank installation
- PVC pipeline connections to 50 beneficiary houses with tap facilities

IMPACTS:

- 50 Arunthathiyar families have safe drinking water in their homes.
- Women no longer need to travel long distances for water.
- Time spent waiting in queues is minimized, allowing for more productive activities.
- Dignity of 50 Arunthathiyar family women is preserved.
- Self-sustained safe drinking water for 50 families.
- 280 individuals benefit from safe drinking water.
- Neighbors around the beneficiary families also gain access to safe drinking water.

SUSTAINABILITY: A committee comprising beneficiaries, WSHG members, VOCRDC, elected leaders, and volunteers was formed for project sustainability. Monthly funds will be collected for maintenance, ensuring the committee's self-sufficiency.

CLOSING: The project, completed by August 31, 2022, achieved 100% completion. Inaugurations were held for each facility, celebrating the improved living conditions of marginalized families. Flex boards recognizing SELAVIP's contribution were displayed for wider visibility.

2. Livelihood Training for Women and Girls:

In the vibrant communities of Vadipatti and Sholavandhan, our organization, VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC), is steadfast in its commitment to fostering positive change and sustainable development. At the heart of our endeavors lies a transformative Livelihood Program aimed at empowering women and families to build a foundation for enduring prosperity.

Program Overview: The Livelihood Program is a holistic initiative designed to uplift the economic and social well-being of the most vulnerable families in these semi-urban areas. Recognizing the intrinsic link between livelihoods and community development, our program strives to break the cycle of poverty by equipping women with essential skills, resources, and opportunities.



Programmatic Activities Summary:

1. **Capacity Building Programs:** Enhanced skills for staff and volunteers.
2. **Website Redesign:** Improved online presence and fundraising.
3. **Village-Level Capacity Building Meetings:** Empowered women in various areas.
4. **Self-Help Groups Formation:** Established 10 SHGs with 165 members.
5. **Seed Money Provision:** Provided financial support to SHGs, garment-making, and beautician trainees.
6. **Garment-Making Training:** Trained 30 women in readymade garment making.

Programmatic Work Activities Implemented:

- Website redesign
- Village-level capacity building meetings
- Seed money provision
- Garment-making



Challenges Faced and Strategies Employed:

- **Sociocultural Barriers:** Addressed through community awareness campaigns and gender sensitization training.
- **Limited Access to Resources:** Overcome by providing seed funding and establishing partnerships.
- **Lack of Skills and Training:** Addressed through comprehensive training programs and partnerships.
- **Balancing Work and Caregiving:** Offered training on time management and work-life balance.
- **Limited Market Opportunities:** Strategies included market assessments and supporting market linkages.

Programmatic Outcomes Achieved:

1. **Enhanced Knowledge and Skills:** Demonstrated improvements in project-specific areas.
2. **Increased Economic Opportunities:** SHG formation and seed money led to improved household income.
3. **Empowerment and Entrepreneurship:** Participants demonstrated entrepreneurial aspirations and financial independence.
4. **Improved Online Presence and Fundraising:** Website redesign resulted in increased traffic and online donations.
5. **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Increased awareness of gender equality and women's rights in communities.
6. **Sustainable Community Development:** Contributed to sustainable community development through skill-building and SHG activities.

Core Indicators Achievements:

- **Improved Self Confidence:** 435 out of 450 participants demonstrated improved self-confidence.
- **Enhanced Business Skills/Practices:** All 70 participants adopted new and enhanced business skills/practices.
- **Increased Monthly Income:** All 70 participants increased their monthly income, averaging \$4 from the baseline of \$2.
- **Increased Savings:** All 70 participants increased their savings, maintaining an average of \$2.

Direct Beneficiaries:

- Women (18+): 350
- Girls (13-17): 100

Estimated Indirect Beneficiaries:

Approximately 2250 individuals had the potential to benefit indirectly.

Acknowledgment to Women First International, USA: We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Women First International, USA, for their unwavering support and partnership in making our Livelihood Program a reality. Their commitment to advancing the socio-economic status of

women aligns seamlessly with our mission, and their generous contributions have played a pivotal role in the success of our initiatives.



Our work showcases a comprehensive approach to women's empowerment, addressing capacity building, financial support, skills training, and community engagement. These accomplishments signify positive shifts in participants' lives and community dynamics, reflecting the program's significant impact.

3. Low-Cost Housing Projects:

Shelter and survival are inseparable facets of human life, and unfortunately, inadequate housing plagues the semi-urban areas of Vadipatti and Sholavandhan. In these unregistered areas, over 200 households endure the challenges of living in huts with mud walls and thatched roofs. The residents, comprising construction, agricultural, and migrant laborers, face dire living conditions, exacerbated by the economic downturn and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Current Living Conditions: Presently, families reside in small thatched huts made from old clothes, sarees, tarpaulin, and printed flex sheets, offering minimal protection from the elements. These families, often with 6 to 8 members, struggle in cramped spaces, particularly affecting women and adolescent girls. Some are forced to live in government community halls, exposing them to issues like sexual harassment and molestation.

Impact of COVID-19: The pandemic has intensified their plight, leading to job losses, homelessness, and reliance on high-interest loans. Economic challenges persist, making it difficult for these families to secure two nutritious meals a day. The lack of basic facilities such as roads, water, and electricity further compounds their struggles.

Project Goals and Specific Purposes:

- **Goal:** To provide houses for 50 vulnerable families, prioritizing women-headed households.
- **Specific Purposes:**
 1. Identify and select 50 deserving poor families without adequate housing.
 2. Ensure access to safe, affordable housing and provide necessary support for maintenance.

3. Improve human resource productivity through safe housing.
4. Impart employable skills to adults for alternative employment opportunities.
5. Enhance the standard of living with acceptable housing amenities.
6. Work towards obtaining basic amenities from local authorities.
7. Protect children, especially girls, from misuse, abuse, and exploitation.
8. Enhance self-esteem and dignity through decent housing.
9. Ensure beneficiary families' participation in planning, designing, and construction.
10. Open a gateway for basic facilities through panchayat administration.



Project Implementation:

- **Beneficiary Selection:** Done through women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) based on criteria like women-headed families, poverty level, number of children, people with different abilities, and land ownership.
- **Land Verification:** Ensure lands are privately owned and obtain permission for construction.
- **Project Management Coordination Committee (PMCC):** Monitor activities and funds with transparency, consisting of VOC RDC Project Director, Project Implementation Staff, Panchayat Administration Representative, SHG Representative, and Beneficiaries Representative.
- **Community Contribution:** Encourage adults in beneficiary families to contribute labor towards construction.
- **Handing Over Ceremony:** Mark completion with ceremonies and hand over keys to beneficiaries.
- **Local Body Engagement:** Work to get new houses taxed for basic amenities provision.
- **Evaluation:** Conduct a comprehensive evaluation with active beneficiary participation for recommendations and suggestions.

Note: The superstructure of 50 houses is currently under construction, and the project aims to complete the construction of all 50 houses by August 2023. This low-cost housing initiative aims not only to provide shelter but to empower and uplift vulnerable families in Vadipatti and Sholavandhan, creating a foundation for a better future.

4. Educational Material Distribution:

With the generous support of Shamdasani Foundation - Hong Kong, our organization has undertaken a meaningful initiative to enhance the educational experience of 50 primary school children in Vadipatti. This initiative focuses on providing essential educational materials to empower these young learners and facilitate their academic journey.

Distribution Details: We are delighted to share that, as part of this initiative, we have successfully distributed comprehensive educational kits to 50 primary school children in Vadipatti. The distributed materials include:



1. **Bags:** Sturdy and practical bags designed to carry books and educational essentials comfortably.
2. **Notebooks:** High-quality notebooks to encourage the habit of note-taking and organized learning.
3. **Stationeries:** Essential stationery items such as pens, pencils, erasers, and sharpeners for daily academic needs.
4. **School Uniforms:** Properly fitted school uniforms to instill a sense of identity and equality among the students.
5. **Footwear:** Durable and comfortable footwear to ensure the children can attend school comfortably, irrespective of weather conditions.

Impact: This initiative aims to eliminate barriers to education by providing the necessary tools for effective learning. By ensuring that these children have access to quality educational materials, we aspire to enhance their overall educational experience, encourage regular attendance, and foster a positive attitude towards learning.

Gratitude to Shamdasani Foundation - Hong Kong: We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Shamdasani Foundation - Hong Kong for their invaluable support in making this initiative a

reality. Their commitment to education and community welfare has directly contributed to the betterment of the lives of these young students in Vadipatti.

5. Awareness Programs:

In our relentless pursuit of community well-being, VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) has orchestrated comprehensive awareness programs to address critical issues affecting the communities of Vadipatti and Sholavandhan. Two prominent initiatives, the HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign and Environmental Awareness Program, exemplify our commitment to fostering a healthier and more informed society.

HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign: Our efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS extend beyond mere information dissemination. Through a dynamic and multifaceted awareness campaign, we have reached diverse segments of the community, leaving a lasting impact. Key initiatives include:



• **Cycle Rally for Outreach:** Taking to the streets with a vibrant cycle rally, we aimed to reach a wider audience, engaging the community in open conversations about

HIV/AIDS prevention. The rally not only promoted awareness but also encouraged active participation and dialogue.

- **Strategic Banner Placement:** To ensure that crucial information reaches every corner, we strategically erected banners in key locations. These banners serve as constant reminders, disseminating essential information and messages related to HIV/AIDS prevention.
- **Community Involvement with Human Chain:** Fostering a sense of community participation, we organized a human chain event. This collective effort not only symbolized solidarity in the fight against HIV/AIDS but also created a visual representation of the community's commitment to spreading awareness.
- **Media Collaboration:** Recognizing the power of media in reaching households, we collaborated with local TV channels. By broadcasting awareness programs, we brought vital information into homes, educating individuals and families about the importance of HIV/AIDS prevention.
- **Commemorating HIV/AIDS Day:** Special events and activities marked our commemoration of HIV/AIDS Day. Through engaging discussions and impactful activities, we encouraged the community to reflect on the significance of prevention, fostering a collective commitment to a healthier future.

Environmental Awareness Program: In our pursuit of holistic community well-being, we recognize the intrinsic connection between environmental health and human well-being. Our

Environmental Awareness Program encompasses a range of initiatives aimed at cultivating a sense of responsibility towards our surroundings. Key activities include:

- **Cycle Rally for Environmental Advocacy:** Leveraging the popularity of cycle rallies, we organized events to raise environmental awareness. Participants pedaled through the



community, delivering messages about the importance of environmental conservation and sustainable practices.

- **Human Chain for Community Cleanliness:** Taking a hands-on approach, we organized human chain events dedicated to cleaning public spaces. Collaborating with the Junior Red Cross, we worked tirelessly to remove garbage and litter, instilling a sense of responsibility for the environment.

- **Planting Saplings for Green Futures:** Recognizing the role of trees in environmental balance, we initiated tree-planting drives. These efforts not only contribute to the overall green cover but also serve as a symbol of our commitment to a sustainable and eco-friendly community.

The dual impact of our HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign and Environmental Awareness Program reflects our dedication to fostering informed communities and nurturing environments that promote well-being. Through these initiatives, we envision a future where awareness leads to positive action, creating lasting change in Vadipatti and Sholavandhan.

6. Conclusion:

In 2022-23, VOC Rural Development Centre (VOCRDC) weaves a tale of transformation. The ongoing construction of 50 houses in Vadipatti and Sholavandhan is more than shelter; it's a promise of security and dignity, set to complete by August 2023, thanks to SELAVIP International, Chile. Shamdasani Foundation - Hong Kong's support furnished 50 children with educational essentials, while our impactful awareness programs, supported by Women First International, USA, reached hearts through various initiatives. Our Livelihood Training for Women and Girls empowers with economic opportunities. As we close this chapter, gratitude to supporters, collaborators, and resilient communities. Together, we nurture hope and inspire change. Thank you for being part of the VOCRDC journey.

Gratefully,
Mrs. S. Latha, President,
VOC Rural Development Centre
