



**The Meeting Point**  
**A Quarterly Newsletter of AREDS**

*The smallest good deed is better than the grandest good intension*

**Issue - 09**

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**Building up of coalition on Right to Land and on local governance**

In the present context, land issue is becoming a sensitive issue in the State of Tamil Nadu as it is in the northern states of India. Every day we hear of 'land grabbing' by the government for handing them over to the multinational companies for installing special economic zones and industrial parks or for implementing the infrastructure development projects such as high ways, power plants, airports, harbours, mines etc., which will ultimately destroy of domestic livelihood resources.



Consequently, the marginalized communities like the dalits, tribals, fisher folk, the urban slum dwellers and the farmers are subjected to forced eviction and are being permanently alienated from their traditional livelihood resources. In order to protect their livelihood resources, the marginalized communities across the state are resisting these undemocratic measures. Many NGOs and Social Movements are backing these communities in their struggle to protect the national natural resources. However, these struggles need to be united into a protracted movement so that retrieving the right of the oppressed people over land will be possible.



Legally speaking, the government has the responsibility of distributing lands, which it had acquired under Land Ceiling Act and Bhoodan Movement, to the landless but it has done a very little in this regard. The local landowners, who are economically as well as politically influential, are possessive of vast acres of Temple Lands and enjoy the benefits.

The government is very lethargic in implementing the land related laws and Acts and it is totally indifferent towards the struggles of the dalits, reclaiming the Panchami Land or Depressed Class Land denied to them. The two-acre land distribution scheme of the Tamil Nadu government, which has been given a wider publicity in the media, has also come to a standstill. Even the scheme of providing housing sites to the homeless has virtually come to a halt in the rural areas.

It is in this context, some of the CCFD partner organization in Tamil Nadu, who have already been involved in educating and mobilizing the marginalized communities on land issue, have felt the need for bringing together all those NGOs and Social Movements into a coalition. CCFD

partner organisations have had three rounds of talks – in May, July and August 2010 - in the wake of forming a coalition among them along with the fraternal forces.

### **Orientation Workshop for Civil Society Organisations in Karur District on the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) and the Model Rules framed by the GOI**

**Date: September 02 – 03, 2010      Place: Karur**

#### **Introduction:**

Only after 62 years of independence, the Indian government has made education mandatory through Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009). It came in effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2010. It is the result of the long struggle undertaken by the educationists, social thinkers, human right activists and child welfare activists for making education free and compulsory.

However, disseminating a general awareness on the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) is very much essential in a multilingual, multicultural and multi doctrine Indian society. So, League for Education and Development (LEAD), a Trichy based NGO, initiated a statewide campaign along with Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL – Tamil Nadu and Puduchery) and United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Tamil Nadu.

Subsequently, a two day orientation workshop was organized in Karur partnering with Karur based NGOs like Association of Rural Education and Development Service (AREDS), Psycho Trust, Sudar and Makkal Valvurimai Iyakkam.

Besides, other NGOs that work for the welfare of the children, Farmers' Associations, Unorganised Workers' Movements, Teachers' Associations, Social Activists, parents and children also took active participation in the workshop.

#### **The proceedings of the workshop:**

Ms. Radha, the executive director of LEAD, welcomed the participants. Mr. Poovai Rameshbabu, the Chairperson of the district panchayat, Karur inaugurated the workshop. Felicitations were made by the following notable personalities:

- ❖ Ms. Sivakamasundari, the chairperson of Karur municipality
- ❖ Mr. Prabhu, the president of Parent-Teachers' Association, MHSS, Karur
- ❖ Dr. M. P. Gurusamy, educationist and the president of Inba Seva Sangam, Karur
- ❖ Mr. Govindaraju, the executive secretary of SEVAI, an NGO



Mr. L. A. Samy, the director of AREDS, chaired the two-day sessions and facilitated the proceedings of the workshop and headed the press meet.

The participants discussed the different aspects and the elements of the Act. They, divided themselves into groups, also discussed the Model Rules framed by the Government of India and

the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in implementing the Act. After discussing the Model Rules framed by the Government of India, they framed the following recommendations that will escalate the quality of the rules and make the implementation telling:

- The School Education Council must be a statutory body.
- 50% of the non-parent representation must be constituted with the civil society representatives, marginalized and the elected representatives of panchayat. Compulsorily, a male and a female student must be members of the council.
- The report on the functioning of the School Education Council must be read out in the Gram Sabha.
- Any kind of sexual abuse, caste discrimination and gender disparity must be treated as crimes and the perpetrators must be penalized.
- Any of the developmental activity undertaken by the government in a village must be implemented, centering on the development of the schools located in that village.
- A class can comprise 20 to 30 children and the class room must be spacious enough to facilitate learning.
- Indiscriminately, all the elementary schools must be concrete buildings with ground floor only.
- There must be no hazardous or polluting industries or water bodies within a radius of 5 kilometers.
- There must be no congested traffic or commercial centres near the schools.
- Each school must necessarily have separate toilets with water facilities for male and female children.
- The toilets must be adolescent girl-friendly.
- The teachers must have required educational qualifications.
- The teachers must necessarily stay in the close vicinity of the school.
- Specially qualified teachers must be appointed for teaching the differently abled children in schools.
- The teachers must have emotional maturity so that they could treat the children the way they need and like.
- Mother tongue must be the medium of instruction.
- Uniform syllabus must be introduced indiscriminately in all schools.
- The syllabus must help the children understand their local geography and history.
- The syllabus should include crafts and moral instructions.
- Syllabus oriented major learning activities must end with school. Light homework tasks must be given to the children so that they could understand familial and social relationships.
- In-service training to the teachers is a must.
- The government should operate exclusive transport service in order to help the children go to school and go home daily in the morning and in the evening.
- The children must be equipped with all potentials to pursue learning when they go for higher education. They must be promoted not on the basis of marks but on everything else – caliber, quest for knowledge and the like.
- The Child Right Commission must be a judicial body and there must be a state level headquarter and regional level headquarters.
- The government should take over all the schools and impart free education to all.
- The government only should impart the primary education, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> standard, through mother tongue.

#### **Unorganised workers' federation members undergo training:**

**T**he member unions – Tamil Nadu Rural Labourers' Movements' Central Trade Union (TRLM-CTU), Karur District All Labourers' Union (KADALU), Barath General Workers' Union and Makkal Valvurimai Iyakkam (People's Movement for Livelihood Right) - of Karur

District Federation for Unorganised Workers' Unions together organised a one-day awareness training on 22.08.2010 on the following themes:

- The status of unorganized workers today
- Addressing the hurdles in registering the physical workers with the Labour Welfare Board
- Including other union into the Karur District Federation for Unorganised Workers' Unions

Mr. Thangavelu, the president of TRLM-CTU explained the status of the unorganized workers today. He said that of the total worker population in India, 93% comprises unorganized workers and the central government can ensure social protection to these workers by allocating 3% of the central budget to the welfare of these workers.

Mr. Sakthivel, the president of Barath General Workers' Union explained the adverse impact of the Government Orders 122 and 123 that brings the unorganized workers under the revenue department and demanded immediate withdrawal of the orders.

Mr. Rajasekar of KADALU spoke on the importance of strengthening the federation of unorganized workers by including more unions into the federation. He emphasized on the integrated way of functioning for checking the practice of bribing for availing the benefits of the welfare scheme. He also insisted on collecting a uniform subscription from the members of the unions and uniform way of putting receipt.

The members dispersed with a determination to strengthen the federation by including more unions into it.

#### **Children undergo training on leadership qualities:**

**T**ulir Thalir Students' Movement (TTSM) is an AREDS-initiated movement for **young students and adolescents in Karur district**. To minimize the number of dropouts and the incidence of child labour in Karur district is the prime objective of TTSM. TTSM has units in almost, in all the villages in the AREDS operational area in Karur district and every unit has its president, secretary and treasurer. TTSM organizes periodical training programmes for the office bearers of TTSM.

Hence, TTSM organized two-day training programme for its office bearers on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2010 at the AREDS Training Centre. 38 members from 12 villages, including presidents, secretaries and treasurers, participated in the training programme.

#### **Core themes of the training:**

- An orientation on AREDS
- An orientation on TTSM and ACTS
- Child Right and Laws and Acts related to children
- The Qualities of the office bearers of TTSM units
- Book-keeping
- Techniques of writing petition on local issues

#### **28.08.2010:**

After icebreaking, the children expressed their expectations from the training programmes:

- The roles and responsibilities of the office bearers
- The method of convening the unit meetings
- The method of writing minutes and reports



Ms. Amutha, the programme coordinator of the AREDS Health Team, explained the vision and mission of AREDS. Mr. Muthukumar, the convenor of TTSM, explained the objective of TTSM.



Then the children were divided into groups and they were let to discuss on child rights and the children became aware of the existence of four components under child right:

- Right to Live
- Right to Development
- Right to Protection
- Right to Participation

They were also became aware of the existence of Acts related to children's issues – Indian Penal Code, section 45, Child Marriage Prevention Act, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009).

**29.08.2010:**

Mr. Sri Rengan, a member of the AREDS Cultural Team imparted training on 'yoga' and other physical exercises to the children early in the morning. The children understood the omportance of going earl bed and early to rise.



Then, the issues and the problems in the villages were discussed at length. Following it, who, when, where and how to address the issues and the problems were also discussed. Consequently, the children became aware of the role of panchayats, the local governance, in fulfilling the basic amenities and preserving the livelihood resources at the grassroots level.

Then, the roles and responsibilities of the TTSM office bearers and the techniques of keeping the records – minutes notebook and reports - with each TTSM unit were discussed. The children became aware that the following 10 items must be registered necessarily in the minutes notebook:

- ✓ Date of the meeting or an event
- ✓ Time of the meeting or an event
- ✓ Place of the meeting or an event

- ✓ Agenda of the meeting or an event
- ✓ Who presides over
- ✓ Resolutions taken
- ✓ Signatures of the participants
- ✓ Signature of the staff
- ✓ Signature of the chief guests
- ✓ Signature of the field staff

**Outcome of the training:**

- The children became aware of the objective of AREDS and the AREDS-initiated people's movements – TTSM and the ACTS in particular.
- They became aware of child rights and the roles and responsibilities of a TTSM activist.
- They became aware of the techniques of handling village problems – writing petition to whom, where to and when.

**Last but not the least:**

We take this opportunity to thank all those partners who have made their annual contribution to the efforts of AREDS-SHARE. Their sincere and generous help is the one that moves our commitment and to reach out. Your timely contribution made out of your personal sacrifices can be sent to the following accounts of AREDS SHARE:

For Belgium Partners

**Account N° : 000 - 0000034 - 34 of ENTRAIDE ET FRATERNITE**  
**32 Rue du Gouvernement Provisoire B 1000 BRUXELLES**  
 avec la mention : pour le projet AREDS Inde 10-499

For Partners in France and the rest of the World

**Centre L.-J. Lebreton**  
**en France, (uniquement en EURO) sur BNP PARIBAS – Compte 10039291**  
**IBAN FR76 3000 4001 8700 0100 3929 110 – BIC: BNPAFRPPPRG**

**Yours in solidarity,**

L. A. Samy