

ARUNTHATHIYAR SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM

FOR EMPOWERING ARUNTHATHIYAR COMMUNITY



ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023

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MESSAGE FROM STATE CONVENOR

On behalf of Arunthathiyar Social Justice Forum(ASJF) I convey my greetings to all,

It is my great privilege to present this annual report ending March 31, 2023. After the big consequences of long period pandemic COVID-19, the marginalised communities are forced backward 30 years. The needs of marginalised communities widely increased. particularly the Dalit Arunthathiyar those who depend on daily wages, Manual scavengers, Rescued bonded laborer are under the clutches of poverty and hunger deaths. Hence ASJF, prioritize the work to support the community to overcome the crisis and support their children education. In recent days the marginalised communities are highly exploited in the name of caste, linguistics and settlements. There is a high demand of organising these people and support their voices. Also I insist all our network partners and members to work towards the system and policy level changes otherwise the development of Arunthathiyar community is a big question mark.

With all your cooperation and support, ASJF continuously works towards the well being of vulnerables Arunthathiyar community in Tamilnadu.

We inspire with words '*nothing is not changeable*'. We thank to all our members and show our gratitude for giving hands in transforming the lives of Arunthathiyar.

Thanking you!

Yours Sincerely

V. Alamelu,
State Convenor

Arunthathiyar Social Justice Forum (ASJF)

*Access of Social Justice, Political identity, Decent work and
Dignified life for Arunthathiyar community*

About us

Tamil Nadu is one of the states which has 6 million population of the Arunthathiyar community. They are considered as lowest in the dalit hierarchy, the 'Dalit among Dalits' - the 'untouchables'. To empower this marginalised community **Arunthathiyar Social Justice Forum (ASJF)** has established itself as a state level forum since 2019. It comprises of young Arunthathiyar activists working in community based organisations across Tamil Nadu. ASJF is working for inclusive development and dignity of Arunthathiyar community. Specifically towards creating awareness on discrimination and atrocities against Arunthathiyars; eradication of manual scavenging primarily associated with Arunthathiyars; fighting against the scourge of untouchability. The forum's strategy has been to mobilise and empower the Arunthathiyar community towards dignity and decent work. Also it aims to access to quality education for Arunthathiyar children; developing self entrepreneurs towards sustainable economic stability and strengthening Arunthathiyar political participation. It conducts periodic trainings to youths and community leaders to transform the status of Arunthathiyar in Tamil Nadu.

Vision

Envision a empowered Arunthathiyar community.

Mission

We work to Protect and promote the rights of Arunthathiyar, especially women and children, and to see the elimination of discrimination and violence against them, and the effective improvement of their education and economy. Eradication of manual scavenging and alternate work for them. In collaboration with like-minded human rights organizations, social movements, professionals and others, we demand accountability from both the state and civil society to ensure equality and dignity to these socially marginalized communities. To undertake wider level advocacy and lobbying particularly at State, National and International level to address violence, discrimination and exploitation on the Arunthathiyar community.

Presence

35 Districts in Tamilnadu.

Interventions

Eradication of Manual Scavenging

In Tamilnadu **manual scavenging** is performed exclusively by one sub-caste of Dalits in particular Arunthathiyar, for whom it is often the sole economic opportunity. Despite being one of the most dehumanizing practices in the world, denounced by both Indian and international laws, the practice is perpetuated and legitimized by the caste system which condemns scavengers to this decent-based occupation. There are three forms of scavenging as defined by the International Labor Organization, that is septic tanks cleaning, removal of human excreta from dry latrines and gutters and sewer cleaning.



Some of the key causes of manual scavenging in Tamilnadu are: poor awareness among manual scavenging communities about the practice of manual scavenging is illegal, compromise their rights and affects not only their health but also the present and future of the family particularly children, lack of alternative employment opportunities, denial of the existence of this practice by the government agencies, lack of agencies of manual scavenging communities to stand up for their rights, inadequate waterborne latrines, existence of dry latrines and practice of open defecation.



Primary Interventions on Manual scavenging

- Organising manual scavengers as district level **Federation**.
- Establishing strong **advocacy forum** for the rights of manual scavengers.
- To improve the **quality of education** and learning outcomes of children from manual scavenging communities
- To improve **sustainable livelihood** opportunities for youth from manual scavenging communities through skill training
- To ensure accountability of the local authorities in the proper implementation of The Prohibition of Employment as **Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013**.
- Developing **self entrepreneurships** for manual scavenger community.
- Providing **skill training** for youth for alternate livelihood opportunities.
- Finding opportunities for **Higher education** and **employments in abroad**.

SMART Classes for Children

With Support of **Kalvi Sakthi Iyakkam** SMART classes for Arunthathiyar children are conducted in 9 districts. Online classes are conducted and also recorded classes are provided for the needy students in the 15 rural Arunthathiyar villages. The smart TV and internet connections are provided by the Kalvi Sakthi Iyakkam. About 1500 students re getting benefit through these classes.

Higher education Scholarship

To support children of manual scavengers distributed education material support such as note books, school bags and stationeries. Also for the children studying in colleges, the higher education scholarships were provided to meet their college fee and exam fee purposes. 31 children got higher education scholarship with support of local mobilized resources. It will help them to continue their education without any interruption.



Campaign on Bonded labour Abolition Act

Bonded labor system

In Tamilnadu, the major victims of the bonded labour system are Dalit Arunthathiyar. The system of bonded labour has been found to exist in India from the ancient times to the present. The system has its roots in the socio-economic structure of our agricultural society which has continued to be dominated by feudal and semi-feudal conditions, hierarchical caste system, extreme poverty and social customs. The upper caste people use the poor bonded laborers for the sake of their pleasure and selfishness. This system which was mostly prevalent among agricultural sector has now spread over to other areas like stone quarries brick kilns, construction sites, textiles, weaving, fishing, bidi making, etc. in this way, the age old inhuman system of bonded labor has taken new dimensions in the present socio-economic structure of our Indian society.

ASJF Interventions on Bonded laborer system

- District level campaign on bonded labour Abolition Act with support of District Legal Service Authorities (DLSA).
- Rescue of Bonded laborers and Rehabilitation with support of District Administration.
- Working with trade unions, local NGOs and CBOs to seek their solidarity for abolition of bonded labour system.
- Bonded Prevalence study with support of central government in selected districts.
- Supporting them to access of social security schemes and entitlements.



Women economic empowerment program

The lack of income generating resources and skills are the major causes for the poverty and bonded laborer system. To abolish the slavery system we provide micro credit for the women to promote them as micro entrepreneurs. With support of Right Sharing fo World resources our net work members got grant for women income generating activities.the micro credit were given to women for goat rearing, milk animals, petty shops, cloth business, old metal shops and tailoring shops. With support of RSWR about 750 women got an opportunity to start small businesses. Also hand holding supports are provided to avail the government schemes for self employments.



EMPOWER WOMEN AT WORK

Introduction

Garment and textile industry is the largest formal sector employer of women in Tamilnadu in South India. It employs more than 80% women and most of them belong to vulnerable Dalit Arunthathiyar community from various Districts. The woman worker have been subjected to severe labour exploitation Including modern slavery in the name of Sumangali scheme, Withholding wages, paying below minimum wage levels, insecure work environment, Excessive working hours, poor living conditions in hostels, low levels of personal health awareness, illness caused by exposure to cotton dust and no access to grievance mechanisms. The legal rights and security entitlements for women workers are denied because of Lack of awareness and unity among the workers and insincerity of the management and governing legal authorities.

Interventions on Spinning and garment women workers

- Organising women workers at village level and support them to access social security schemes.
- Interface meeting with government officers and employers to understand the situation of workers and their basic demands.
- Press meet and media campaigns on worker rights.
- Legal aid camps for women workers with support of DLSA.
- Linking with trade unions and unorganised workers welfare board.
- Training on POSH Act and Gender Based Violences for women workers.
- Strengthening legal mechanisms in favour of women workers.
- Ensuring Safe and secure work environment and decent work.



State Level Consultation MeetingL

To strengthening ASJF members advocacy and Lobby skills two days consultation and training program was conducted in Erode. In this consultation Advocate P.B Mohan, Advocate Chenniyappan and Mr. Edward from HRF participated and gave training on POA Act. Arunthathiyar political Leaders and community leaders also participated and share their experiences.



Youth Leadership Trainings

To develop the leadership skills among the Arunthathiyar youths that the 5 module trainings were conducted. ASJF partners mobilised youths from respective districts and the residential trainings were given to them. In the this training the youths were given inputs on self, society, right to education, mother land and environmental awareness. About 60 youths enhanced their leadership skills through this trainings.



INTERVENTION OUTCOMES

- 51 Organisation leaders capacitated to work towards Arunthathiyar empowerment.
- 60 Youths trained on leadership skills to lead the community.
- 8 Atrocities on Arunthathiyar were fact finding done.
- Consultation on Manual scavenging was done with multiple stakeholders.
- 1500 Children are benefitting through SMART classes.
- 136 Manual scavengers are supported to get entitlements.
- 750 women were developed as self entrepreneurs with support of RSWR
- 36 girls got Higher education support.

STRATEGIC PLAN (2023-2025)

- Advocacy and Lobby with government to increase inner reservation for Arunthathiyar as 6% with support of multi-stake holders.
- To demand manual scavenging as common work with reservation as per other other government jobs.
- To increase the manual scavengers victim compensation as 1 crore.
- To demand to provide the victims heir jobs as per qualification.
- 100 Girl Children will be supported to get higher education to get dignity work in abroad.

Executive Committee

- Mrs. V.Alamelu, State Convenor.
- Mrs. R. Geetha, Co-Convenor,
- Mrs. Anandhi, Committee Member.
- Mrs. Shanthi, Committee Member.
- Mrs. Sathyavani, Committee Member
- Mr. K. Palanisamy, Committee Member.
- Mr. R. Gurusamy, Committee Member.

Networks & Alliances

- Consortium of Street Children (CSC)
- Human Rights Education & Research Foundation(HRF)
- Tamilnadu Untouchability Eradication Movement
- Tamilnadu Land Rights Movement(TNLRM)
- Makkal Nalvazhvu Iyakkam(MNI)
- International Justice Mission(IJM)
- Arunthathiyar People Movements.

Advisors & Consultants

- Mr. Ambrose
- Mr. Edwin (HRF)
- Mr. Krishnamoorthy
- Mrs. Anita (NHRF)
- Mrs. Manjula
- Mr. Stephen



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