



## help 1033 poorest salt worker families in India project

### **Background of the proposing organization:**

FACE is basically an organization, working with salt workers and other marginal and hidden-neglected communities in Tamilnadu. We presently work with salt Workers in Vedaraniyam and Tuticorin (two important salt production centers in Tamilnadu). Salt worker community is very depressed, vulnerable and voiceless community which is in the complete pocket of ruling salt producers. the Bay of Bengal report of Ministry of Industries (salt Commission) accepts that salt workers are the poorest of the poor in the country. But unfortunately because of many reasons, there is no specific development light on the group. A good old professional group earning comparatively a bigger foreign exchange to the nation lies uncared until tsunami. For example, the total number of salt workers in Tamilnadu is about 2 lakhs but the salt commission record says that it is just 14956. Tsunami had further paralyzed the community and affected the livelihood. However, as a privilege in distress, the tsunami interventions of civil societies like FACE had brought a little light on salt workers community to the mainstream.

Tsunami intervention relationship with salt workers had created a better understanding to FACE Team. FACE and salt worker community started collectively discussing about situation, analyzed the issues, cause and effect and developed a strategic plan to empower salt workers in Tamilnadu.

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### **Issues:**

1. Very poor Household income due to seasonal employment, inadequate skills, inadequate access to state resources (including access to credit), no representation in decision making groups, Voiceless and somehow bonded working nature and etc.
2. Very poor working condition( no drinking water, no Toilet facility, No rest Shed, No lights, No proper road, No first aid or health care facility, No child care facility, poor health seeking behavior, Health hazards due to excessive heads in saltpan.)
3. Poor literacy level -Girl child school drop outs in 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> standard is very high among salt workers. Because the women salt laborers, as they go to saltpans in very early time (2am and 3am) the elder girl child is taking care of younger children, cooking and household works and as there is a need of change over to a high school in far place from elementary, cultural associated causes and fear results school drop outs.
4. No coverage of state safety net and other programs.(No proper execution of law, No proper information about salt laborers in the state, No priority to the salt workers in the policies and programs and etc.

### **Strategic Intervention Plan:**

In the facilitation of Professor Dr Shankar, Head of the Department of Social Work and Sociology, Bharadidasan University the community representatives and FACE team members had collectively analyzed and prioritized the issues and developed the following strategic intervention plan.

As most of the issues are magnification of voicelessness, collectivization had been identified as an effective and foremost strategy. The other strategies selected are capacity building, establishment of micro credit system, linkages

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with other stakeholder organization to create better access to resources, demonstration and direct support for most deserving households etc

According to the plan FACE had facilitated the community.

### **The following are the achievements of community facilitated by FACE:**

A salt worker association is formed initially registered under Tamilnadu state Societies Registration act 27, 1975 later it is promoted to a State level Labour Union (registered under labour union act). About 3000 members joined together and achieved the following:

1. Vedaraniyam & Tuticorin are two important salt production centers in Tamilnadu. There will be a difference of 50% salt prize between both the centers. Vedaraniyam salt rate will be at least 50% lesser than Tuticorin salt. The rate difference always heavily influences the labors and marginal salt producers. The difference is really because of the inadequate transport access. ( Tuticorin has Broad gauge train route, National high way and shipping, whereas Vedaraniyam has none of them. So, Highlighting this issue directly (and to make a strong light on the issues of the laborers indirectly) on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2006, Community groups of FACE had successfully organized a big livelihood conference in Vedaraniyam Rajaji Park and strategically invited Railway state Minister R.Velu, Salt Deputy Commissioner, Jaipalsingh and Additional and many political leaders, MPs, MLAs and etc to the conference. It was a very successful advocacy event, which resulted 200 Million allotment in Indian Railway budget of 2006-07 for Broad gauge train route between Agasthiampalli Vedaraniyam and Thiruvarur.(Even in the meeting Minister had announced this). Medias had covered this event (sun news had telecasted the program on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2006 morning). As expected by the community groups, the

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program had thrown a light on the laborers. Also, community had gained a confidence to go further on their way with FACE.

2. As an indirect outcome of the advocacy many outcomes resulted like The UNDP had undertaken a study on the livelihood condition of salt laborers and first of all recognized the issue, Asian development Bank had generously started extending support to the industry. (Unfortunately, the processes had given no significant support to labourers), Salt commission had constructed 350 houses to salt labourers in vedaraniyam.(the scheme called NAME was already there but mostly the benefits are harvested by producers in the name of labourers
3. Both Vedaraniyam and Tuticorin Production centers are absolutely in the hands of producers and political power points. At least to some extend because of the collective actions, people have little bit started free breathing now.
4. The district administration is now trying to enlist salt laborers under Manual Laborers Welfare Board.
5. Micro credit system established 1033 households had improved their household income by minimum 20%
6. The community had become conscious.
7. Few demonstrations to improve the working condition taken place and etc.

(Here we want to gratefully mention the names of our donors who made it possible by funding, technical and moral support. OXFAM KINDERHILFSWERK, INDIA, SAVE THE CHILDREN AND UNDP, more specifically Ms.Sikey, livelihood advisor of OXFAM Mr. Stieve Global Livelihood Adviser of OXFAM GB and Ms.Sonya Livelihood Advisor of SAVE THE CHILDREN, Mr Gopalan, Program Manager, OXFAM, Mr. JP Singh , Asian Director of KINDERHILFSWERK, Germany and etc)

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### Continuing Challenges:

1. 1033 Most vulnerable households certainly require a support arm for a protected and decent home, health care facilities, children education and etc.
2. till the state reacts, there is a clear timely need of creating a minimum working environment,
3. The labour union requires increased capacity and motivation towards undertaking advocacy agendas.

Therefore, FACE had decided to reach generous supporters and change makers through global giving.

All individuals and institutions interested in partnering with this venture, do supports us and contact us.

*For further reading see Sorrow of salt makers in India article in Global South Development Magazine- October Issue, Bay of Bengal Report of Government of India and UNDP's report on the condition of salt workers.*

On Behalf of the community and FACE

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**Credential of FACE :**

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FACE is one of the certified best performing NGO in Tamilnadu. In a program held at Ethiraj Collage organized by Madras Development Society, Minister of Finance, Mr.Anbashagan, Government of Tamilnadu along with Minister of power, Mr Arkadu Veerasamy, Minister of Revenue, Mr.Periyasamy and State planning commission Deputy Chairman, Mr.Naganadan issued the certificate and shield to the general Secretary of FACE.