

# SKILLS FOR FREEDOM

Newsletter from India

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This electronic newsletter from **PEACE TRUST, INDIA** is addressed to NGO's, Social Activists, Media, Opinion makers, Leaders and Bureaucrats for improving their understanding on skilling the youth for gainful employment and addressing social issues like modern slavery, child labour, migrant labour, unemployability of youth. We also send this to people who we believe are involved in improving the migrant worker's conditions. You are welcome to unsubscribe yourself, if you so choose.

-EDITOR

Peace Trust is a Non Government Organization working on Child Labour and Bonded Labour issues since 1984. It has also focused on Migrant workers rights issue since 1999.

- o Peace Trust's Skills for Freedom is the only solution to end Modern Slavery in Tamil Nadu. It is a joint effort for enhancing the employment opportunities of rural youth in Dindigul, Karur, Tiruppur Districts.
- o Reduce the risk for Young Workers - Beginning of this month Peace Trust has launched a new Initiative to "Support School Education, Health Protection, Livelihood Development and Skill Training for Gainful Employment among Vulnerable Young Population in Dindigul District".
- o SPSC Vocational Education & Employment Facilitation Centre provides access to vocational education and employment facilitation for rural poor youth in Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur District Tamil Nadu and Karaikal District, Puducherry.
- o Peace Trust also provides training for Quality Teacher Education and gainful employment to young women from resource poor families in Dindigul and Karur District.

The views expressed are not of the donors but a compilation of field realities for the purpose of sharing and action.

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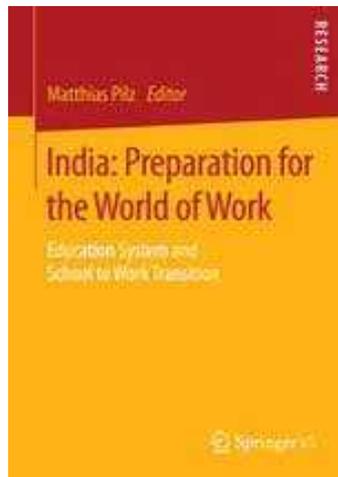
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# NGO's INITIATIVE

## Skill Development



**The book titled India: Preparation for the World of Work is edited by Matthias Pilz. The article shares the experiences and innovation of Indian NGOs like Peace Trust and others. The article contributed by Dr. Uma Gengaiah was part of the book.**

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### Introduction

Globalization, that is, the opening up of economy (Chenoy 2012) and the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies in the year 1990s created new waves in all sectors in India. Especially it generated workforce demand in the manufacturing and service sectors like retail, media, automobile, hospitality, healthcare, IT and IETS, medical transcription, aviation and marketing. The market required skilled human power to function effectively. The 11th five year plan envisioned to provide skill training to potential employers by strengthening the existing infrastructure and creating proper institutional mechanism to address the needs of the market. Many have played an active role in transforming the unskilled/ semi-skilled people into skilled ones. The union ministries, state governments, private sectors and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), all are involved in the skill development programme. NGOs work (Chenoy 2012) especially among socio-economically weaker sections and try to make them a part of skilled human power, thereby providing opportunities for them to overcome poverty.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment in India formulated a National Skill Development Policy in the 11th five year plan (2007-2012) period and it is being given priority in the 12th five year plan (2012-2017) period. 11th five year plan provided three tier institutional structure for skill development. The government also wanted to identify the gaps in imparting skill training in the 12th five year plan and it initiated coordinated efforts to address the issue. Hence, developing a curriculum according to the demands of the industry becomes important. So, the government analyzed each sector and its required skilled human power to train prospective employees. This paper focuses only the role of NGOs in providing skill training. Before analyzing that, the theoretical perspectives on the development of NGOs over a period and the role played by the NGOs in the development sector has to be discussed.

## Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

In the modern development discourse, NGOs play a significant role in addressing the concerns of the socially and economically weaker sections of the population and they work closely with the disadvantaged to address their concerns. Various mechanisms are used by the NGOs to strengthen them (Kilby 2004). These mechanisms include creating space for the poor to raise their voice, enabling them to access public resources and making them to avail government schemes and programmes. These process adopted by the NGOs make the disadvantaged empowered (Narayan 1999; Aus Aid 2001). For example, one of the largest NGO in India, Action for Welfare and Awakening (AWARE) in Andhra Pradesh had formed 200 village organizations, bringing 23,000 hectares of land under cultivation and mobilized a volunteer force of 25,000 people by the late 1980s. This action challenged the powerful land-owning community in Andhra Pradesh (Clarke 1998; ADB Cooperation with NGOs 1989). According to Patrick Kilby “Non Governmental Organizations are self- governing independent bodies, voluntary in nature, and tend to engage both their supporters and constituency on the basis of values or some shared interest or concern, and have a public benefit purpose” (Fisher 1997; Lissner 1977; Salamon & Anheier 1999; Salamon et al., 2000; Vakil 1997).

NGOs working in the development sector consider themselves as part of the society and so they play empowering and representative roles (Abramson 1999; Gaventa 1999; Nelson 1995). NGOs are not membership-based organizations (Fowler 2000), but they are governed by self-appointed board members and have small regular staff based on religious or ethical values (Thomas 2004). Since they generate funds from different sources and work for the weaker sections of the population, they generally lack downward accountability to the constituents (Mulgan 2003; Najam 1996; Salamon, hems & Chinnock 2000). The driving forces behind NGOs’ activities are the values they pursue and the work they undertake to improve the livelihoods of the weaker sections of the society (Edwards and Sen 2000; Fowler 1996; Gerard 1983; Lissner 1997). As it has been said, “..... (NGOs are) the heartland of the social economy since they are marked by distinctive value systems....” (Paton, 1993 p.6) “NGOs are value- base participants representing the concrete interests of marginalized groups.” (Nelson, 1995, p.41); Lissner defines NGOs values as:

The basis on which agency (NGO) policy makers interpret trends and events. It emanates from religious beliefs, historical traditions, prevailing social norms, personal experiences, and similar basic sources if human attitudes....(they) cannot be directly translated into concrete action because of their degree of abstraction ....yet they are still sufficiently clear for the policy makers to take their bearings from them when deciding on the fundamental direction of their agency (1997, p.74).

The above-mentioned quote tells us how NGOs look at the world from a certain philosophy. With regard to evolution, Korten classifies NGOs into four generations. First generation NGOs were committed to relief and welfare activities and they addressed the immediate needs of the community. The second generation NGOs encouraged small scale self-reliant local development projects. They could prove their ability to the donors. Stronger sustainability emerged in the third generation NGOs and they influenced public policy also. In the fourth generation, NGOs are largely involved in community organization, mobilization and coalition-building and they aim for long-term structural change at the national and international level. (Korten, 1990). Based on Korten’s classification, one may understand that there were generational changes in the NGOs activities. One may also need to know the activities of the NGOs based on their relationship with the different actors like state, donors and community.

In the developing world like India, Philanthropic Foundations, Church development agencies, academic think-tanks and other organizations focusing on issues like human rights, gender, health, agricultural development, social welfare, environment, and indigenous peoples are also part of NGOs. Apart from these, private hospitals, schools and religious groups do philanthropic works. But, they are not identified as NGOs. People's organizations (POs) and membership-based cooperatives are also not identified as NGOs (Clarke, 1998; Carroll, 1992).

The following factors have been identified for the emergence of large number of NGOs, especially in the developing countries. The most significant reason is the increased percentage of aid to the southern NGOs by the Northern NGOs. The second reason is the emergence of neo-liberal economic policy. In the neo-liberal economic climate, the role of state has been reduced to address the socio economic condition of the population. At the same time, the pressure from the member states to address the concerns of the weaker sections of the population made the developing countries involve various actors especially NGOs. Thirdly, multi-lateral and bilateral agencies provide considerable aid to the NGOs to work at the grassroots. The data gathered by Carothers in the 1990s, showed that the United States (US) is spending more than US\$ 700 million in a year to implement democracy programmes in the countries located in Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union, Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. Economic recession in 1980 and the NGO working in close proximity with the communities at that time is also a reason why governments of developing countries started recognizing NGOs. NGOs also collaborate with the governments to implement the some programmes' (Carothers, 1999).

In India, NGOs are formally registered bodies. They are not government –based. NGOs are non-profit / public charitable organizations and can be registered as trusts, societies, or private limited non-profit companies, under section-25 companies act. Non-profit organizations in India (a) are independent of the state; (b) are self-governed by a board of trustees or 'managing committee' / governing council, comprising individuals, who generally serve in a fiduciary capacity; (c) benefit others, generally outside the membership of the organization; and (d), are 'non-profit-making', in as much as they are prohibited from distributing a monetary residual to their own members (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

NGOs in India can be classified based on their purpose, philosophy, expertise, programmes, approach and scope. NGOs may also called operational /Advocacy NGOs. Some may operate at operate at international level, some at national level and some at local level.

In India, after the independence, the state concentrated more on the welfare programmes and introduced a number of measures to address the needs of the citizens. Citizens could avail the social benefits free of cost. The state legitimized its intervention due to the mass poverty and backwardness (Scott, 1998). Based on the Gandhian principle of Constructive Programme, Gandhian ideology-based organizations like Gandhi peace Foundation (GPF), Khadi and Village Industries Corporation (KVIC) and the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural development(AVARD) were promoted by the state, after independence, to closely work with people for many issues - basic education, health, agricultural programme, rural development. These organizations were heavily supported by the five year plans. The first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru fully supported and promoted community-based organizations (CSOs). Nehru's death and the emergence of Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister brought many changes in the country, like Centralization of power, price rise, emergence of regional parties, Congress losing power in many States and Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) social moment. Being a Gandhian, JP opposed the Indira Gandhi government for its authoritarian attitude and urged all Gandhians to come forward to oppose the government. This non-violent struggle

protest was called Sampurna Kranti or total revolution. JP was supported by another Gandhian Moraji Desai. Gandhian NGOs - GPF and AVARD - also protested against the Indira Gandhi regime. Indira Gandhi imposed emergency on 26 June, 1975. It lasted for 21 months. During this period, voluntary organizations faced many restrictions and the government promoted only apolitical organizations. The Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (1976) was enacted to monitor political associations and the funds they receive from foreign sources (N.Biswas, 2006). After the emergency period was over, Moraji Desai came to power and he encouraged voluntary organizations (Sahoo, 2013). His government allocated Rs.500 million to NGOs and added section 35 CCA to Income Tax Act, which allowed corporations to deduct donations to NGOs from their taxable income (Kudva, 2005).

Large scale social movements in the late 1960s and 1970s like JP movement in India fragmented and became small NGOs. (Human Development Report, 1993; OECD, 1998; Lehmann, 1990).

In India, Sethi (H.Sethi, 1993, p.75) argues,

A withering of formal representative institutions has fuelled the explosion in NGO numbers. Since the mid-1970s, political parties have increasingly dismissed significant sections of the dalits (scheduled castes), tribal groups, other backward castes (OBCs), and the poor and landless, as unorganizable, while trade unions have failed to penetrate informal sectors of the economy.

Hence, NGOs filled the vacuum created by political parties and trade unions. Like pressure groups, NGOs also exerted pressure to influence the public policies (Clarke, 1998).

Rajiv Gandhi also encouraged NGOs and increased the funding. His government provided Rs.2.5 billion to NGOs in the social sector. (Sahoo, 2013).

One million registered associations are in India. Among them around 100,000 identify themselves as development organization directly involved in empowering economically weaker sections. (Elliot, 1987; Rajasekhar,2000; Vakil, 1997).

Through the 1970s and early 1980s NGOs emerged as institutions for development in India. However, modern development discourse expects NGOs to play a critical role in making the socio-economically weaker sections of the society, socially economically and politically empowered ones. (Jorgensen, 1996; Krut, 1997; Nelson, 1995; White,1999; World Bank,1996).

Feminists involved rural women in the conservation of nature and natural resource management and this led to the formation of environment –related NGOs in the 1980s. These NGOs were also involved in women empowerment.

In this process, NGOs are considered as part of the developmental process and become prominent from 1980s onwards due to less advancement in the development goals targeted after independence. During this period, there were lots of changes in the economic sphere and in the perspective of developmentalism. The period also witnessed the introduction of neo-liberal economic policies and the slow withdrawal of nation-state in the process of development. International development aid was also increased. Favorable government policies in India helped NGOs increase their presence in development. In the context of globalization and neo-liberal economic policies, international agencies like the World Bank and International Monetary fund (IMF) insisted structural reforms and encouraged government to involve NGOs in development work. They felt that the existing government structures were incompetent in implementing programmes at the grassroots level due to its

over-bureaucratic and lack of experience in social mobilization. (Biswas, 2006; Ghosh, 2009).

India adopted structural adjustment policies in 1991 and the government brought many reforms. The most significant reforms were transparency, accountability, equity in accessing all government programmes. The state slowly withdrew the many social welfare programmes and introduced many rights-based programmes. The state also collaborated with civil societies, market and transnational organizations to address the concerns of the society. As per the conditions imposed by the world bank and IMF for receiving aid, India promoted (apolitical) the NGO sector as part of the good governance agenda (R.Jenkins, 2005). NGOs promoted neo-liberal economic agenda like self-help, entrepreneurship and social mobilization (Jakimow, 2009). The private sector- multi-national and transnational corporations – participated in social development through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.

The Government of India introduced Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY) scheme in 1999. It provided opportunities for NGOs to mobilize women and marginalized groups and make them participate in the economy (self help groups). The main objective of the SGSY programmes is to ensure assisted poor families, who are above the poverty line (Swarozgaris), an applicable sustained level of income over a period of time. This can be achieved by inducting rural poor into self- help groups (SHGs) through social mobilization, training and capacity building and creating provision for income generation assets (GOI, 2004). The scheme concentrates on establishing micro-enterprises at grassroots level by encouraging activity clusters, providing infrastructure support, technology credit and market linkages ( Shylendra and Bhardikar, 2005). The working of the 10th five year plan mentioned that social mobilization is a key factor in SGSY programme. And they recognized that NGOs were better equipped in doing this than the government agencies (GOI, 2001).

Identifying skill gap and providing skill training to unskilled and semi-skilled workers is different when compared to self-help programmes due to various reasons like target population, employable skill training, creating opportunities for employment, identifying training centers, creating partnership with industries and creating requisite mindset on skill development. Many NGOs in almost all parts of the country are involved in skill development initiatives through Vocational Education and Training (VET) (According to NSDC, 2014 there are 150 training partners both for-profit and not- for- profit ones). Since NGOs work closely with the society, Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) could be made accessible to socio-economically weaker sections and youths in rural areas. In order to analyze the role of NGOs in skill development, this paper has taken two NGOs for study and has analyzed their activities – Peace Trust from Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, a southern state in India and Etasha, which works from New Delhi. Based on that, this paper will look in to the role of NGOs in skill development and the challenges they may encounter in imparting the same. The activities of NGOs in skill development were analyzed using good governance principles - accessibility, availability and equity.

### **Skill Development, Governance and NGOs- Methodology**

The government of India recognized the significance of good governance as deprivation and inequality continued due to poor governance (GOI 2002a.). According to the government, good governance means the ‘management of all such process that, in any society, define the environment which permits and enables the individuals to raise their capability levels, on the

one hand, and provide opportunities to realize their potential and enlarge these of available choices, on the other' ( ibid.:177).

Therefore, it is imperative to follow governance (good governance) principles, if any institutions - government, Corporations or NGO - working for a community wants to improve their lives and livelihoods. Since the NGOs are working for improving a community by imparting skills to low/semi skilled people and transforming them into an employable population in the market, this paper has used good governance principles as a framework to analyze the skill development activities of NGOs. Based on the analysis of these two NGOs, this paper attempts provide a few policy prescriptions for the NGOs to make their skill development activities more result-oriented and sustainable. The NGO Peace Trust is from Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, and Southern State of India. The NGOs, Peace Trust and Etasha, were chosen based on purpose sampling method.

The two NGOs were chosen because they have worked specifically with the youth to make them skilled and employable. Peace Trust was established in 1984 at Dindigul. It has been engaged in social work for several years, helping the child laborers get released from hazardous industries like tanneries and cotton mills. It works particularly in rural areas, rehabilitates child laborers and provides skill training for them (Peace Trust, 2014). Etasha was started in 2006 and it believes that by helping young people acquire new skills by giving them access to relevant vocational training and later connecting them to employers, they enable them to take control of their careers and lives and help their families break out of the cycle of poverty (Etasha, 2014). The skill development activities of both of these NGOs were documented by interacting with the heads of these institutions through a semi-structured questionnaire. The activity reports of these NGOs were thus analyzed.

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has completed the skill gap assessment study for the States of Tamil Nadu and Delhi. The skill gap identified by the NSDC in Tamil Nadu and Delhi are also considered for discussion.

### **NGOs' Initiatives on skill development**

Several NGOs all over the country involved in skill development. The NSDC has prepared a report based on the need for skill development in each state in the country, except Bihar and Chhattisgarh (nsdc.org accessed on 24.11.2014). This paper first discussed the activities of peace trust having experience in the development sector for nearly two decades for the release and rehabilitation of child laborers and in providing skill training for rural youth. Peace Industrial School (PIS) was launched by Peace Trust in 2000 with financial assistance from Indiska Magasinet, and it provides technical education for former child labourers and underprivileged youth thereby enabling them to get suitable industrial employment and encourages self-employment.

Peace Trust has been providing quality skill training for positions like:

- Electrician, Fitter, Industrial Tailor, Embroiderer, Fashion Designer
- Computer Operator, Data Processor, Desktop Publisher
- Fire & Safety Managers, Industrial Safety Mangers/ Home Appliances Maintainer
- Psychologist, Counsellors, Trainers, Residential Warden & Secondary, Higher Secondary Teachers
- Watershed Mangers, NGO Project Managers
- And provides coaching for government, bank, public sector jobs

PIS has so far provided technical education to 1,076 youth in various technical courses between 2000 and 2013. As many as 734 youths have got gainful employment in the nearby garment factories, textile industries, computer and browsing centres, petrol stations, rental shops and schools (including government ones) etc., and 214 youths have started their own micro and small enterprises. These technically qualified youth are currently earning an average annual income of Rs. 96,000 which is recurring, stable and sustainable. They have thereby improved their standard of living. These youths, if not trained, would have become unskilled labourers and toiled for meagre income, which is also not permanent. (Peace trust, 2014).

Similarly, Indiska's support for the peace Garments and Handicrafts centre is also significant because it continuously provides livelihood for 60 women and has capacitated 250 women from the drought- prone rural villages of Dindigul.

Etasha receives funds from government, corporate organizations, International funding agencies and private banks. Its branches in Delhi provide various types of vocational training. They have listed out the areas where they have decided to do this. They operate skill training in 5 models to reach target groups.

They run dynamic training hubs named Career Development Centres (CDCs) in the slum areas of south Delhi, from which their community mobilization team engages with local youth and their families, community and religious leaders and other NGOs. They work with the students of other vocational training providers to improve their employability skills through their programmes and also manage students' placement. They also collaborate with other NGOs to train youth in their communities. They have opened temporary 'satellite centers' in local areas contiguous with but not close enough to their CDCs, to run programmes accessible to local youth. They run programmes from rented premises or an NGO-run school. They closely work with industries to identify their specialized skill requirements and based on that they design and deliver joint programmes for youth from low socio-economic communities. For example Project Indradhanush, a collaborative project with Nippon Paints to train youth as colour matchers for the Automotive Paints Industry was initiated in November 2011.

In all their programmes, they incorporated compulsory spoken English course, computer skill and self confidence course. At the end of the programme, during the last week of each session, the learners undergo rigorous practice and preparation to equip themselves for placement into an organized sector. Etasha's placement team will connect the prospective employees to potential employers by arranging interviews and supporting them through the process until placement is made.

## **Analysis of the NGO activities**

### **Need**

With regard to the need, Peace Trust provides skill training according to the study conducted by NSDC. The courses offered by them are also in line with the NSDC's latest report on skill gap assessment from 2012-17 and 2017-22 (NSDC, district-wise skill gap study for the State of Tamil Nadu, 2012). Tamil Nadu will require 1.9 million skilled human resource and 1.5 million semi-skilled human resource by the end of 2017. But the current availability is 1 million and 0.2 million in each category respectively. The Peace Trust did situational need assessment study in Dindigul to find out the problems regarding acquiring education and employment. They also studied the needed intervention to make the youth employable. Before starting their skill development programme, it conducted a scientific field study. According to the study, large numbers of children are forced to work in the agricultural field

or take up small low-paid unskilled jobs after spending ten hours in school. Most of the children achieve basic literacy, numeracy and smattering of English while in school. The findings of the study were incorporated in the project proposal for skill training. They found that lack of mentorship, lethargy and fear of competition lead many youth to discontinue their studies. Based on the needs and requirements for local level and skill requirement for macro level (state level), courses are identified and developed. They ensure that the courses fulfil the skill requirement of various sectors such as automobile, construction, food processing, textiles and retail industry even in the developed districts of Tamil Nadu. The strategy of Peace Trust clearly indicates the accessibility and availability of courses based on need (peace trust, 2014).

According to the NSDC study, there is sufficient supply of skilled workforce through 2012-2017 and 2012-2022 in Delhi (NSDC, District Wise Skill gap for the State of Delhi, 2012). But, there is shortage of semi-skilled workforce. The availability of skilled workforce also depends on the availability of training institutes and the number of people willing to enrol in these training institutes. The Skill gap report of Delhi mentioned the areas needed to be covered. The syllabus for the manufacturing sectors needs to be revised. The government should establish training institutes for retail and healthcare industry because there is none now. There is workforce shortage in retail, hospitality, automobile and auto parts manufacturing and metallic products manufacturing. The demand for workforce for construction and domestic help in Delhi is noteworthy. The existing study has noted labour exploitation in these sectors. The government needs to bring appropriate institutional mechanisms to avoid exploitation. Acting according to the skill gap report, Etasha provides skill training in retail sector with a special emphasis in their curriculum for language and computer proficiency (Etasha, 2014).

### **Equity**

With regard to equity, Peace Trust targets economically and socially underprivileged groups. Trained youth are placed in different sectors. According to the data 734 youths employed and 214 trained youths started their own employment.

According to Etasha, skill training facilitates is an entry point for the disadvantaged into the organized sector and to bring them into mainstream society. Their target trainees are mainly from slum and slum resettlement colonies in Delhi, who have migrated from rural areas and are agricultural families. They also target small vendors and service providers in the unorganized sector. If we have a look at the profiles of their trainees, they are either school drop outs, or are working to support their families while continuing their education. They ensure that all the trainees looking for work must be 18 at the time of completing a programme and must have cleared 10th standard. Both Peace Trust and Etasha targets school drop outs from economically weaker sections of the society.

### **Accessibility and Availability**

Having a look at the skill training programmes of both the NGOs, their activities are accessible by all the socio- economically weaker sections of the society. Etasha is running 4 centers. Three are located in Delhi and one in Gurgaon. They also collaborate with other NGOs in North Delhi. They collaborate with government Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) to train the learners and make them employable. Etasha's syllabus stresses the significance of combined development. Along with skill development, they focus on confidence building and inter and intra personal skills. They believe this will assist underprivileged young people to move into an organized structure, where they will face situations they might not have come across before, thereby enabling them to interact successfully with people from all sections of

society. The course fee of Peace Trust is fixed low by considering socio economic condition of the learners. Also the trust arrange loans for economically, socially backward students. After placing the learners, it follows up if they are progressing in their careers. During the admission period, they motivate learners. The institute environment is inclusive in nature. In Etasha, a learner's average income is Rs. 5,000 per month or less than that. They learners have attended low-end government schools and generally reside in slum or slum resettlement colonies around the capital, where crime is common. Typically, such colonies have major power and electricity shortages throughout the summer and sanitation is poor. Etasha branches in Madanpur Khadar and Tigri, both in South Delhi, are located near slum colonies and are community training hubs. It was able to place 71 per cent of their learners in formal employment in 2012 in sectors like, designing and architecture, financial services, manufacturing and travel.

Trainees' starting salaries ranges from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 15,000 per month, and some organizations offer free travel, subsidized food, life and health insurance.

### **Partnership with other agencies**

With regard to partnership with government and other agencies, Peace Trust carried out a survey involving the government and community to identify the needs of the society. This programme was funded by Indiska Magasinet, Swedish business firm. Apart from financial assistance by an international agency to run the programme, it collaborated with British Council, Chennai, BBC Radio Station, London and Dutch Valley Radio for communicative English. It also has MOUs with deemed universities, autonomous organizations and institutions under central government ministry. They get resource material for banking courses from the 83 years old pioneering institute called S.N.Das Gupta College.

Etasha is also supported by corporate programmes like HDFC Bank community Programme, TATA communications funding Vocational Training in Delhi, Bain and Company (Project Sarthank), Accenture Employee giving programme, Charities Aid foundation Project, Airtel Delhi half marathon funding 2013 skill training programme under project swavlamban. Other supporters are Amdocs' project samarth, Project Concern International, Career High way, FICCI ladies Organization and GAIL India, United Nations office on drugs and Crime, Nippon paint, Amrjothi Charitable Trust, Barclays shared services, Aga Khan development network, Maruti Suzuki, Arpana Trust, Tech Mahindra foundation and JCB India

### **Curriculum and Course fee**

Etasha's skill development programme has 220 hours of inputs. It is designed to develop a positive attitude, hard and soft skills and finally place young people into entry level careers. Peace Trust has incorporated more practical components in their curriculum rather than theoretical input. After consulting all the stakeholders, both the NGOs have designed the syllabus according to the needs of the industry. Both the NGOs have collaborated with industries and the government to utilize the space of ITCs and ITIs and to mobilize requisite fund to support the programmes. They design the curriculum by themselves. They target school drop outs and youth working in the unorganized sectors. Along with sector specific syllabus, they give more emphasis on individual development and communication skill. As far as the fee structure is concerned Peace Trust minimum fees of Rs.2,000 and maximum, Rs.4,000, depending on the nature of the Course and the socio-economic background of the family. A learner from economically lower stratum gets fee exemption. Etasha's course fee is also affordable for socio- economically weaker sections.

## **Sustainability of NGO activities**

Having a look at the Skill development activities of two NGOs, they depend on external sources like private banks, corporations and International NGOs for funding. Funding from external sources is time-bound. While NGOs have the responsibility to keep the course fee low to encourage weaker sections of the society to enroll themselves in the courses, they should also provide quality skill training. Along with generating funds from student fee, they are in a position to augment resources from various sources to make their activities sustainable. Industry collaboration may provide sustainability. Social Impact Assessment is one such activity in which NGOs may assess their activities to make them sustainable.

Frank Vanclay (2003) defined “Social impact assessment includes the process of analyzing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions. Its primary purpose is to bring more sustainable and equitable bio physical and human environment”. Skill development programmes are carried out by NGOs as per government policies and market requirements. It is done to bring intended and unintended changes among individuals and society. By developing appropriate indicators, NGOs activities can be assessed so that it can be followed by other NGOs.

## **Challenges**

Skill Development is considered as an employment-oriented course/ programme and not education. There is a need for concerted action in several key areas to ensure that skill training takes place in a demand driven manner. The curriculum for skill development has to be updated continuously to meet the demands of the employers/industry and it has to be aligned the available self-employment opportunities. Accreditation and certification system has to be improved. The existing national-level institutions may be equipped with providing needed information on skill inventory and skill maps on a real time basis. A sectoral approach is required for this purpose with special emphasis on those sectors that have high employment potential. NSDC (NSDC 2012) has done a study and found the skill gaps at the national and state level in India. Peace Trust in Tamil Nadu as well as Etasha in New Delhi has developed programmes for skill development based on this study conducted by NSDC. Other NGOs involved in skill training can adopt the same kind of programmes. This will help achieve the 12th five year plan target. The main challenges to the NGOs are to provide certification and quality training based on National Vocational Qualification framework. Since the NGOs are closely working with the community, they can identify if a potential candidate is a dropout or a semi-literate or has completed school. India is likely to achieve 100 per cent youth literacy by 2015. NGOs can conduct skill development programmes for them to make them a part of mainstream economic activities.

As per the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, Companies have to spend two percentage of their average net profit on CSR activities (CII, 2013). Companies invite proposal from NGOs for this. NGOs can align with corporate and develop proposal according to the needs of the companies to train the youth. Etasha generates funds by aligning with the corporate. Since it regularly interacts with the companies, the NGO is able to place their learners after the training. Other NGOs can follow this too. The lack of required technical infrastructure and trained teachers in ITIs, ITCs and Polytechnics are challenge that the NGOs have to face to provide quality education to the learners. For this they have to generate funds from external sources to improve the infrastructure. NGOs also actively participate in forming self help groups. For an example Myrada, an NGO (Fernandez, 2008) is involved in mobilizing unskilled women as self help groups. Self help groups are trained in small entrepreneurial activities like running food canteen, production of packaged food items,

handicrafts. By observing the activities of both the NGOs, we can see that the socio-economic condition of the learners becomes a priority for them. Governance principles like need, accessibility and availability are also given priority. Another area NGOs need to provide attention is bringing gender perspectives into their work. Human development indicators have identified gender differences in accessing resources in the areas of health, education (see National Human Development Report, 2001 for detailed educational status of girls, boys, men and women-- Government of India, 2002). Considering this, NGOs need to collect sex disaggregated data to encourage everyone to access skill development programme. The existing data shows that girls have a higher percentage in being school drop outs. Lesser number of women have the opportunity to do college education and higher studies. Skill development can act as an alternative to higher education and women will be able to do production-related work. Also, gender-sensitive awareness courses can be incorporated in the skill development curriculum. As much as 60 per cent of Indian economic output is from informal sector (World Bank, 2008; ILO, 2002). Workers from informal sector are unskilled or semi-skilled, without certification (Pilz, Uma and Venkatram, 2014). By targeting unskilled workers in the informal economy and giving them training, NGOs can bring them into formal economy. The important thing is to not only expand access, but also to provide quality Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) for all. NGOs depend on external funding sources for running skill development programmes. Many NGOs are located in rural and semi-urban areas unlike Etasha. They lack requisite infrastructure to provide skill development. NSDC's proposal in 2012 (NSDC, 2012) for NGOs involvement in skill development in formal and informal sector states that they provide funds only for skill development and not for infrastructure development. If NGOs do not have proper infrastructure, they need to depend on external sources for practical classes. They need to bear the cost for it. Because of this, many NGOs hesitate to run skill development programmes. In situation like this NGOs can tie up with ITIs and ITCs for providing TVET training. NSDC prioritized 20 sectors (10 industry and 10 services) and sought proposals from NGOs to impart training. The proposal clearly stated that the NGOs should prioritize unorganized sector. After implementing neo-liberal economic policies, higher educational institutions like engineering colleges, nursing training institutes, teacher training institutes, Arts and Science colleges have increased manifold. Currently there are 621 Universities, 32,974 Colleges and 11,144 standalone institutions all over the country (Ministry of Human Resources, 2013). NGOs can tie up with these institutions for providing training to people working in the unorganized sector. TVET training can be organized after college hours or during weekends. Though there are lots of potential in the primary sector, government skill gap reports are prioritizing secondary and tertiary sectors. Organic farming and other farm-related activities and off- farm activities of agriculture and allied sectors are waiting for takers. Reduction in human power in agriculture and large scale migration to urban areas from rural areas has impacted agriculture. Due to migration by male population, agriculture has become feminized. Contribution of agriculture to economic growth (GDP) has also slowed down. The rate of growth of major sectors during 2008-2009 at factor cost (2004-2005 prices) for agriculture is 1.6% (Government of India, 2010b, p.3). The increasing rate of skilled human power and mechanization of agriculture may increase agriculture productivity. So, since many of the NGOs located in semi- urban and rural areas, there is more chance for them to concentrate on skill development in agriculture sector.

### **Concluding Observation**

The paper has analyzed the role of NGOs in skill development by observing the activities of two NGOs from governance perspectives. Considering this, we have understood that they target unskilled educated youth from socio-economically weaker sections, to give skill

training. NGOs establish the required infrastructure by mobilizing financial resources from various sources. Neo-liberal economic climate has contributed to the development of NGOs. Apart from free market economy, neo-liberal economy too has given the importance to governance thereby promoting economically weaker sections as economic actors (entrepreneurs) by providing skills. Socio-economically weaker sections are concentrated in the unorganized sectors and primary sectors. NGOs, private sectors and government can collaborate among them to make the weaker sections skilled so that they have the chance to work in the organized sectors. The previous government of India programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and SGSY also targeted the economically weaker sections to improve their livelihoods through various kinds of economic activities. All the previous poverty eradication programmes of government of India brought certain population above poverty level, but some gaps were found in implementing those programmes (Fernandez, 2008). NGOs need to conduct a study among the target population and other stakeholders to assess the existing economic potential of the target population, their skill level, education level, available local resources like technical institutions, skilled human requirement of the district and potential collaborators. NGOs also need to conduct impact assessment study in regular interval among skilled youth to know if the training has created significant improvement in their lives.



### **‘CHANGES TO CHILD LABOUR LAW CONTRADICT GOVERNMENT’S MAKE IN INDIA, DIGITAL INDIA AND SMART CITIES MISSION ’**

Child rights activists have been protesting against Parliament passing the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016. Nobel Peace Prize laureate *Kailash Satyarthi* spoke to *Himanshi Dhawan* about why he thinks the new legislation, which amended the previous Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, is a missed opportunity.

### **What is your view of Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, passed by Parliament?**

This is a missed opportunity for the future of millions of our children. I am deeply disappointed and quite surprised that labour minister Bandaru Dattatreya [minister of state

with independent charge] has not listened to the voice of millions of children. But laws are not the end of the road. I believe in the power of children and youth in building a much stronger social movement.

I was hoping that the first phase of my 36 year struggle would be over with the passing of a strong law against child labour and that i could thereafter begin work on the implementation of the law but the first phase is still not over. The struggle that we have been engaged with for the last three decades will continue.

**One of the objections that you have raised is that the new law allows children under 14 years of age to participate in family-run businesses. Would you rather be arresting parents for letting their children help them?**

The flaw in this legislation is that the line between learning with your parents and economic exploitation is blurred. This is so misleading. I have rescued thousands of children from uncles and aunts who are traffickers. They keep the children as bonded slaves. Our experience is that this will continue.

The other inherent contradiction in the law is that repeat offenders will be punished but there is no clarity on a first time offender. How will you establish a first time offender?

**What are your other objections?**

The second main objection is that the number of hazardous occupations in the new amended legislation has been reduced from 83 to three. Children can now legally work in glass furnaces, bidi-making, brick kilns and zari factories. Government has the power to amend the list of hazardous occupations and i hope we can convince them to do so.

**But the Act has increased penalty provisions for those employing child labour and violations have been made a cognisable offence. Isn't that good?**

This law has covered some miles but we have not reached the destination yet. These welfare laws are not amended every day. The original law was brought in 1986 after a long struggle and at the time socio-economic arguments like poverty were given in defence of child labour. We are repeating the same arguments to further victimise the child.

We need to outlaw child labour completely and not in a piecemeal manner. We have lost three generations of children. It is ironical that the land of Buddha and Gandhi has decided to look at children through the commercial lens and to take away their divine right to childhood.

**You met PM Modi to press for changes in the law some months ago. What would you say to him now?**

When i met him, i explained that there is an inherent contradiction in what this law seeks to achieve and the government's schemes like Make in India, Digital India and Smart Cities Mission. How can you have a smart city if children are engaged in domestic labour? This government has invited big investors under Make in India. But if we don't have an educated skilled workforce, how will we attract big investors? This 'golmaal' mix won't work.

The country's growth rate cannot increase and we cannot compete internationally like this. Only if we face these realities will we have a demographic dividend. Big investors are dependent on local producers but if they are found to be using child labour, India will have to face international embarrassment. Many countries like Bangladesh, Brazil and Cambodia have had their products boycotted because of this very reason.

We need to put our house in order instead. We have miserably failed in ensuring children's attendance in schools despite a law that says that this is their fundamental right.

## **MIGRANTS**

### **A DAY AFTER RECORD RESCUE, 3,000 MIGRANTS SAVED OFF LIBYA**

After several weeks of relative calm in the stretch of Mediterranean between Italy and Libya, more than 1,100 people were rescued on Sunday and another 6,500 on Monday.

By: AFP | Rome | August 31, 2016 4:05 am

Rescuers saved 3,000 migrants in the waters off Libya on Tuesday as they tried desperately to reach Europe, a day after a record 6,500 people were rescued in the Mediterranean.

"Around 3,000 migrants were saved Tuesday during 30 operations coordinated by the coastguard," the Italian coastguard said in a statement.

After several weeks of relative calm in the stretch of Mediterranean between Italy and Libya, more than 1,100 people were rescued on Sunday and another 6,500 on Monday.

Dramatic images distributed by the Italian coastguard showed children among the survivors crammed onto an old fishing boat.

Some of the migrants jumped off the vessel in life jackets and swam towards their rescuers.

The total number of arrivals in Italy this year now stands at 112,500, according to the UN's refugee agency and the coastguard, slightly below the 116,000 recorded by the same point in 2015.

Involved in the rescue at dawn on Monday were the Italian coastguard and navy, and the Dignity 1 ship operated by the NGO Doctors Without Borders (MSF), whose spokesman Nicholas Papachrysostomou said 650 people were saved.

"Many of them had never seen the sea before. There were elderly women on board, sick people, and several children aged 13 or 4 who were travelling alone," he said.

“They were fighting each other to be rescued first, they were jumping into the water, it was hard to control the situation.” However, the drama was far from over.

“At the end of the day, the horizon was filled with boats,” Papachrysostomo told AFP, speaking by phone from the Dignity 1. “It was an extraordinary day,” he added.

Another NGO, Proactiva Open Arms, described Monday as “an endless day” and “a sad record” on its Facebook page. Among the survivors were babies and small children carried by their parents. A mother and her premature newborn were evacuated by helicopter as soon as they had been rescued.

Today morning, a woman gave birth on board the rescue ship as it made its way to the Italian coast. She and her newborn were taken by speedboat to the island of Lampedusa, while the rest of the migrants made their way to several ports in Sicily, Sardinia and southern Italy. The coastguard and MSF said the spike in migrant arrivals was due to improved weather conditions after a bad spell.

## ENVIRONMENT

### WATER TABLE RISES IN GANGA BASIN BUT SO DOES SALINITY

**Researchers analysed groundwater levels from 3,429 wells and spatial data in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.**

The gravest threat to groundwater in India isn't over-exploitation but arsenic and salt contamination.

This is the conclusion of a new study published on Monday in Nature Geoscience, which also challenges several recent reports to say that 70 per cent of the water table in most of the Indo-Gangetic aquifer — among the largest in the world — is ‘stable and mostly improving’.

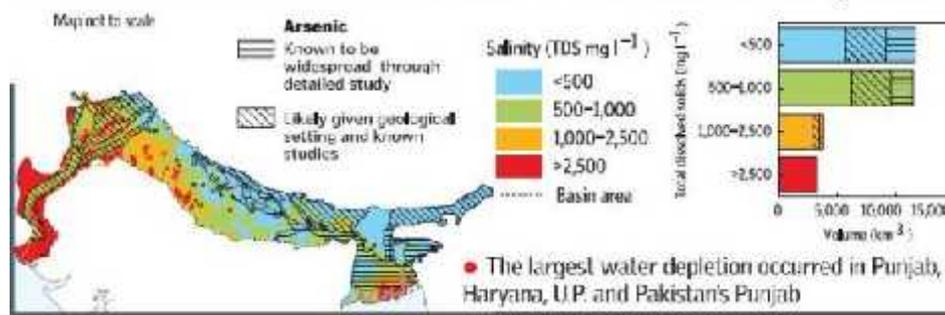
The authors of the study, “Groundwater quality and depletion in the Indo-Gangetic Basin mapped from in situ observations”, say the unsustainable levels of groundwater extraction are largely limited to urban agglomerations in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

However, nearly 23 per cent of the 300 BCM (billion cubic metre) is extremely saline and about 40 per cent contaminated by arsenic, says the study, authored by an international team of researchers led by A.M. MacDonald and H.C. Bonsor, which includes K. Gopal of the National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee and A. Mukherjee, of IIT Kharagpur. In recent years, several reports have warned of alarming groundwater depletion in northwest India and Pakistan based on satellite imagery from the Gravity Recovery and Satellite Experiment (GRACE) that has minutely tracked how gravity varies across the earth since 2002.

For their study, Prof. MacDonald, Principal Geologist with the British Geological Survey, and colleagues analysed groundwater tables from 3,429 wells, high-resolution spatial data and studies within Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bangladesh between 2000 and 2012.

## HIGH ON ARSENIC

Nearly 23% of groundwater in the Ganga basin is saline and about 40% is contaminated by arsenic



The researchers sought to assess groundwater-level variations, groundwater quality and groundwater storage within the top 200 m of the Indo-Gangetic aquifer. “Compiled water-table records indicate substantial spatial variability. (This) is unresolvable by GRACE and depends on ground-truth observations,” the authors added. Canals built in the 19 and 20 centuries significantly influenced groundwater trends, the study says as water accumulated at the origins of the canal tended to “leak out”, leading to high recharge and sometimes floods.

Moreover, geological variations determine how much groundwater is available in a region and only regular groundwater observations would give an accurate picture of water availability, the researchers add.

Independent experts said groundwater trends were highly variable across India and could change year on year. “Even one year of drought can substantially alter groundwater availability though we’ve known for a while that it’s the northwest where groundwater levels are worrisome,” said G.S. Jha, former chief of the Central Groundwater Board.

According to a review of India’s water resources by the government in December 2015, India has a usable resource of 1,123 BCM/year of which surface water and groundwater is 690 BCM/year and 433 BCM/year respectively. Setting aside 35 BCM for natural discharge, the net annual ground water availability for the entire country is 398 BCM.

## MAKING FARMING AN ATTRACTIVE PROPOSITION

A five-member team of Agricultural Research Scientists from the Indian Council of Agriculture Research – National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM) has helped Manjalkollai villagers to form a Village Agriculture Development Plan (VADP) to develop agricultural activities and make farming, an attractive proposition.

The scientists – M Annamalai, D S Aniesrani Delfiya (Tamil Nadu), Priyanka (Karnataka), Rahul Chandora (Punjab) and Musaffar Hassan (Rajasthan) – who camped in the village in Bogalur block, near here, sensitised farmers, women folk, youth and landless labourers on planning and management of farming, using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools.

The newly recruited scientists who were on their Field Experience Training (FET) to interact with the farming community and to get an insight into their lifestyle, needs, resources, priorities, problems and prospects in respect to farming and social life, helped them to identify the locally available resources to overcome obstacles.

“We have designed the VADP, headed by the village panchayat president to make villagers find solutions to their problems, using locally available resources and get to know about various schemes implemented by the Agriculture and its sister departments for the benefit of the farming community,” Mr Annamalai, one of the scientists, told The Hindu on Monday, at the end of their 22-day camp.

The villagers mainly complained about scarcity of water for irrigation, decreased fertility in lands, migration of youth to urban areas finding farming non prospective, post harvesting losses and lack of transport and marketing facilities, he said. The scientists helped them to take up the issues with the concerned departments and seek remedy, he said.

Guided by Mr Rajasekaran, Programme Coordinator, ICAR – Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), the scientists organised Focussed Group Discussion (FGD) recently, providing a platform to the farmers to directly present their problems with officials from Agriculture and allied departments, he said.

The officials, who prioritised some of the problems promised to solve them. The Agriculture Engineering division came forward to establish a cold storage facility in the village and offered to make available tractors for ploughing at low hiring rate.

The scientists also identified an area with good water source and suggested that the farmers take up flower crops such as jasmine, marigold and crossandra, he said.

## **TNAU COLLEGE RAISES ‘KAL VAZHAI’ FARM FOR TREATMENT OF WASTEWATER**

### **Agriculture College develops two-stage organic treatment of sewage**

Every drop of sewage water collected from the girls’ hostel of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University – Engineering College and Research Institute at Kumulur near here is being treated and let off into an open well of the institute for irrigation for paddy, maize, and horticultural crops.

The availability of sprawling area on the campus has facilitated the purification process. The wastewater, which contains heavy metals, is purified in two phases. A channel has been dug for about 10 metres and the black wastewater is first passed through a thickly grown reed bed. Outside the bed, the colour of the raw sewage changes, indicating its partial purification.

The semi-treated water then is let into the thickly cultivated kal vazhai (*cana indica*) plants. “It may be hard for you to believe that the sewage water becomes pure beyond the kal vazhai bed,” says K. Ramaswamy, Dean of the Institute.

He explained that the reed and kal vazhai acted as a natural agent for purification of the sewage water. The sewage water from the hostel contains a large number of organic impurities, which are first purified by the reed plants. The kal vazhai absorbs heavy metals such as aluminium, iron, and phosphorous and their compounds and grows on them.

“The water is purified and sent to an open well about 500 metres away from the hostel. We have buried PVC pipes below the earth,” says V. Ravikumar, Professor and Head of the Soil and Water Conservation Engineering Department of the institute.

The institute has been using the water for irrigating the fields. “The well whose water level was low about a year ago, has registered a sharp improvement, thanks to the continued discharge of the treated water round the clock,” he said.

The daily realisation of purified water is about 10,000 litres, according to an estimate. The well is overflowing now, in contrast to last when it the water level was 10 to 15 feet.



*Natural cleaning:* The open well at the farm of the TNAU - agricultural engineering college and research institute at Kumulur near Tiruchi where the treated water is stored.

The institute has developed a separate farm all around the well for treatment of the sewage water.

## **NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS CAMPAIGN 2016-17**

Peace Trust has started the campaign work 2016-17 under the theme of “Clean India, Ganga Rejuvenation, and River Cleaning.” The campaign has announced the National Environment Awareness Campaign by Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and uploaded the guidelines and application proforma in the Peace Trust website.

<http://www.peacetrust.in/national/index.php>

Peace Trust has distributed 500 printed applications totally and 350 applications were despatched through post and 150 applications were received by the participating NGOs in the Peace Trust – office in person. The pre-proposal workshop was conducted on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2016 in Peace Trust, Dindigul. The announcement about the workshop is posted in facebook page of “Peace Trust” and “Neac South TamilNadu”. A radio announcement was made through Pasumai Community Radio which covers districts like Dindigul, Karur and Tirupur.

The workshop was conducted in two sessions. The forenoon session was conducted for districts like, Coimbatore, Dindigul, Madurai, Nagapattinam, Nilgiri, Thanjavur, Theni, Trichirapalli, Tiruvarur and Virudhunagar. 54 participants have participated in the workshop and clarified the doubts about the theme and filling the applications.

The afternoon session was conducted for districts like, Karur, Sivagangai, Ramanathapuram, Tirupur, Kanya Kumari, Tuticorin, Tirunelveli and Pudukottai. 50 participants have participated in the workshop and clarified the doubts about the theme. Participants have asked doubts on River cleaning process. It was explained in detail and an article regarding the River cleaning and water management in “Suttruchoozal Puthiyakalvi” a monthly journal environment magazine was distributed to the participants.

The NGO’s have submitted applications for taking part in the campaign and the process of scrutinizing is taken up by Peace Trust team. The applications will be presented to the Southern Regional Committee for NEAC Constituted by MEFCC, Govt of India.

## FIELD EXPERIENCE OF A CITY COLLEGE STUDENT

**Ms. P. Adlin Helen, Post Graduate student of Loyola College, Chennai and other students stayed and interacted with ex-child labour and children from single parent families at Kadampuliyur village near Panrutti of Cuddalore district.**



### **A bizarre learning in the village:**

It has been made mandatory for all post graduate students to have an exposure on village life-learning outside classroom. We were all set ready for a one week rural camp. We were given enough orientation on what to do and what not during the camp. We still had no idea of the place we were going to live and no idea of the accommodation and the kind of work we will be put through. We were just left clueless on how things are going to be and were asked to board the train (Trichy-Mangalore express) on 29<sup>th</sup> August which leaves from Egmore railway station in Chennai.

It was a wonderful start and we landed at Panruti station (Cuddalore district) after four hours of journey. We walked to Panruti Bus-stand which was almost a mile from the station under the scorching sun. We then boarded a local bus to Kadampuliyur with loads of luggage. It took nearly ten to fifteen minutes to reach Kadampuliyur through the forest of cashew trees. We were taken to E.Ra.Kannusamy Govt Hr Sec School and were given accommodation in the classrooms in that school separately for both boys and girls. The classrooms allotted for forty boys had only two fans and five restrooms. Though the girls had much sophisticated classrooms when compared to the boys, there was only one bathing room and three restrooms. Yet no one made a fuss about the facilities, provided we all expected the worst. After lunch we geared up ourselves to inaugurate the camp in the evening. We successfully inaugurated with the help of some important people in the village. A retired Physical Director named Mr. Karthirvelan and a NSS Coordinator agreed to be our guides during our village visits. But they didn't even give any clue of the villages we were going to the very next day. After dinner we had an ice breaking session which was helpful in knowing one another. Then the entire team was shuffled and put into five different groups. The groups are allotted for documentation, prayer, food, time management and cultural.

The first day of our camp started with one hour of prayer and meditation. After breakfast we were divided into two batches to two different villages each accompanied by the guides and

faculties. We then walked a mile to a village called Gandhi Nagar. The village had a pond and two Ayyanar temples in the entrance. The god Ayyanar is the guardian of the village. No wonder the majority of the people there in the village are hindus. The first task given to us was removing the weeds grown along the roadside and make the village clean. We all started off with much enthusiasm having sickles and spades in our hands. Once the task was given everyone was on the field cleaning and no one hesitated to work and all worked as if they are cleaning their own houses. The spirit of responsibility could be seen in everyone's work. We even had the chance of killing a snake which is an unusual thing for people in cities. One thing we observed at the very first sight of the village was it was very calm and there were no vehicle noises ,clean air and free to roam around .after sometime we decided to see around the village and understand it. We found that their major occupation is related to Cashew business which is the major cash crop of that place and mostly women are indulged in the work. A very few of us were sent to a Primary School I the village which had only one teacher for all five standards. We then looked after the kids till the lunch was given. After the lunch we were again split in pairs and were sent to take survey to each house .a questionnaire was given on the basis of flood impact on the village. It was very sultry and we expected a good rain that evening. After the survey we were surprised to see that in most of the houses only the women are going for work and the men sit idle at home. Their major occupation is breaking the shells of cashew nut and it's not an easy man's job. There are several methods for breaking the shell. Yet most of these women follow the conventional method of breaking with stones where there are lots of chances of hurting their hands and also the milk from the cashew nut shell spreads on their palms and it never goes off and causing pain. Another method involves an instrument which has a clutch at the bottom and a hand gear at the top and both has to be pressed at a time to move the sharp knife which removes the shell at one pace. This is quite dangerous and the chances of hurting their hands is very high .they get a daily wage of rs.200 which the entire family depends on in families where women alone work. Here girls are getting married to men who are very older to them. On an average the age difference between a married couple is around 13-15. We also found that girls stop their education after school and get married at a very early age. And most of the girls after they attain their puberty were asked to go for work and put an end to education after that.

None of the houses in the village had restrooms. And people there were not aware of the basic amneties one should have in their houses and also of the different schemes and reservations the government has allotted for them in various fields. In the evening there was a small talk by the Alumni of the school where we were staying. One person was a retired fire service and he shared his wonderful fire rescuing operations he did during his service. The situation day ended well with heavy downpour as expected. There was a Lady who told us about the women in their area and she was happy to say there had been a phenomenal change over the years especially when it comes to women empowerment and people are becoming open minded in accepting love marriages because of which there had been lots of rivalry among the villages and that's one the reasons why girls were made to marry early. After the dinner as planned we had an evaluation on our works that day and sharing of personal experiences.

***A note about Cashew:***

The cashew tree (*Anacardium Occidentale*) is a tropical evergreen tree that produces the cashew seed and the cashew apple.

It can grow as high as 14 m (46 ft), but the dwarf cashew, growing up to 6 metres (20 ft), has proved more profitable, with earlier maturity and higher yields.

The cashew seed, often simply called a cashew, is widely consumed. It is eaten on its own, used in recipes, or processed into cashew cheese or cashew butter. The cashew apple is light reddish to yellow fruit, whose pulp can be processed into a sweet, astringent fruit drink or distilled into liquor.

The shell of the cashew seed yields derivatives that can be used in many applications from lubricants to paints.

The species is originally native to northeastern Brazil. Today, major production of cashews occurs in Vietnam, Nigeria, India and Ivory Coast.



***Cashew***

The next day was little skeptical whether we could resume the work in the villages as the Climate was cloudy and had huge chances of raining. But we were not that lucky enough by the time we finished our breakfast the sun started showing its teeth. And there was no change in the duties given to us. The same cleaning of the villages but at different places and some to the schools to teach the kids. The kids were really amazing and had huge curiosity to learn .they were all sincerely preparing for their monthly exams with no teacher to monitor over. We took up that responsibility and guided them in learning. It was surprising to see that the kids wanted to learn English than their mother toque is Tamil. They all have such an amazing memory power that you don't have to repeat your teaching several times those they just grasp at the velocity of light. The children were little disappointed as we had to leave them for lunch.

We were quite excited as our lunch was Biriyani which we enjoyed eating under the trees along the banks of the pond. Few of our boys had even a bath in that pond though there were few buffaloes swimming .Well, that's also a village experience. As scheduled we went to

take survey from the houses. This time it was easy as we had learned how to approach the people and interact accordingly. That evening all the groups were asked to develop a model village on ground with the available sources in and around the school campus. It was totally fun that everyone took charge of making a model/miniature of the things present in a village. Every team came out with a new concept and presented it beautifully. Many of us developed our village envisioning how a village should be. It should have all basic amenities as well as it can also have industries without affecting the resources and beauty of the village but it can provide employment to the people in the village. After that we again had talks by various personalities. There was one business man who explained about the business of Cashew Nut and how money transactions take place so easily even at a tea shop for over ten crores on an average scale. He told that Panruti is the main business hub for cashew nuts in TamilNadu and the cashews are rated for second grade quality. The first grade quality is available only in Maharashtra. There was a bunch of girls doing Agriculture Graduation in Anamalai University who had come for their internships. They were studying about the cashew cultivation, right from plucking the seeds from the trees to packing them in tight polythene covers in the factories. Their team leader gave an inspiring speech on agriculture and how much they love and enjoy studying agriculture. She was very furious and gave instant reply for all the questions that were posed to her regarding Agriculture. After that we had dinner & were asked to prepare for cultural events that were to be held in the village the very next day.



### **Cashew Shop**

On the suggestion of one of our batch mates we decided to do our cleaning work in the school premises where we were staying. Though we were doing the same cleaning work for three days the level of spirit didn't slide a bit on the other hand it raised to a much higher level as we had come to the end of our camp duties. After a rehearsal of cultural events we were set ready to do it in public. It was like Clean Kadampuliyur project. The motto of the cultural events was not only to entertain people but also to give an insight of basic knowledge a villager should in the pursuit of developing his/her village. It was merely an awareness programme on various aspects and also sharing of our experiences in the village. The programme was a huge success and it really delighted the people. We all left the place with a hope that definitely there will be some progress in their life we have put into aware them .the last night of our camp was little different from others. First, we were happy that we were going back home and second ,we finally had achieved something good in our lives by teaching the public on as a volunteer that too with so much care and love which was given to us by those people. Something memorable has happened in our lives.

The final day was the valedictory day. We had one hour prayer and meditation as usual .after our last breakfast in the camp we had a valedictory session led by our Faculties and we felicitated all the good souls who were very supportive and made the camp a Huge Success.

We then journeyed back to our Chennai city of hustling and bustling noises still breathing the memories of fresh air and fearless life.

- Experience written by Ms. P. Adlin Helen. She hails from a development worker family

