

GROOTS

GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS OPERATING TOGETHER IN SISTERHOOD (SOUTH ASIA)

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Editorial

Will 2016 be the Year of Disaster or Fortune?

The heavily important recent monsoon battered Chennai, Kancheepuram, Thiruvallur and Cuddalore of Tamil Nadu. It's beyond description to mention the human tragedy disrupting the normal life and completely throwing everything out of gear. The death toll in the rain related incidents as per the news are over 200. This incessant downpour in the months of November and December has left the poor with scars, homelessness and unforgettable memories.

As the Chennai city with the population of 4.3 million people struggle, the worst sufferers are the slum dwellers who constitute 30% of the city's population. Lacking basic necessities it was almost both physical and mental trauma for them having their houses submerged in contaminated water from drainage and storm water drains. Many of them were made homeless by this downpour and had no option



but only to sit on the roads, tank bunds of the water bodies and walking barefoot for many miles to access drinking water, food, with uncertainty looming over their future having lost all valuables. These are common scenes everywhere.

While nature's fury was very harsh but still this cannot be attributed to nature alone as we too have not been prepared for this. One cannot deny or rule out the insensitivity of the administration/ authorities for the aftermath/ severe consequences particularly the poor/ vulnerable suffered. Is it not the duty of the government to save such surroundings where poor live/work? The government whether past, present or the future always have promised them with better housing, sanitary facilities and infrastructures but the situation is different in reality and it landed them in a disastrous situation.



Most huts/houses in the informal settlement are constructed weakly and collapsed as the basement is not strong and is built on dried up lakes, rivers and canals. It is also very rare for the poor to have insurance for their homes, health or possessions. It also demonstrated how the policy makers were indifferent about the problems of the needy and vulnerable.

As per the government report nearly 1.5 lakh illegal structures have come up around Chennai and built on encroached water bodies. It has also led to disappearance of more than 300 water bodies. Such rampant and illegal structures allowed by the government knowingly/unknowingly led to improper drainage system, allowing the storm rain water to enter the houses any moment. The government despite having the authority neither was keen to take action nor prevented such illegal structures. While one administration has allowed liberal encroachment by the poor on the dried up water bodies, the other administration could not even take up proper care of the existing systems by taking up the work of desilting and strengthening of the water bodies. The floods destroyed all such disorganized housing. It clearly demonstrated that there is a connection between corruption, disaster, destruction and death of the poor and the vulnerable. This flood also demonstrated irrespective of poverty, the poor also have to pay penalty for their indiscriminate land usage and encroachment on low lying areas, lakes, ponds, etc.

This is a disaster of the millennium particularly affecting Chennai, a water starved city and its surroundings. The rain fall that the city received was the highest in over 100 years. However the authorities failed to carry out their responsibilities i.e., to desilt canals, lakes, ponds

and strengthening the bunds by neglecting these development works for years. This has resulted now in an unprecedented flood devastating the living/working conditions of the poor on one side also water starvation and low irrigation for agriculture development on the other side, as none of the water bodies could hold back the water. So it's once again back to sq.¹. Who will suffer now – it's not the well-to-do, as they can afford water from any source and if they are land owners they don't bother about irrigation and dispose their land as real-estates. It is the poor who will suffer by not having access to drinking water or for irrigation for even the smallest piece of land they have.

The worst immediate consequences will be the suffering of the people particularly the vulnerable from dreadful diseases such as dengue, cholera, malaria, diarrhoea, fever that spread as aftermath and may be a massive outbreak anytime. Therefore, let's wait and watch whether 2016 will continue to be a year of disaster or fortune?



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VISITORS TO WORKING WOMEN'S FORUM (INDIA)/ INDIAN COOPERATIVE NETWORK FOR WOMEN



Hon'ble Minister for Women & Child Development listening to entrepreneurs

It was a rare privilege and honour for the Indian Co-operative Network for Women when Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhiji, Hon. Minister for Women and Child Development, visited its Channapatna Branch on October 29, 2015.

She expressed her great joy in meeting the women entrepreneurs who displayed different products made by them. The Hon. Minister congratulated Dr. Nandini Azad, President, ICNW on its achievements that were shared by Branch Co-ordinator, Ms. Shanthi D.

The Hon. Minister then shared with the women entrepreneurs' details of the recently launched initiative of the Ministry for the empowerment of women entitled "Women of India." The initiative is aimed at providing them a platform for national and international marketing through an on-line marketing portal "E-Bay," she said. She also shared thoughts on how the women could add value to their products to widen their marketing base through this portal.

To learn from the work/activities of Working Women's Forum (India) Ms. Daniela Biocca and Mr. Stefano Battain, independent researchers from Italy visited WWF, Chennai on November 20, 2015 after they visited Puducherry. They were eager to identify, analyze and document the reasons that were behind the success of various organizations particularly women's activism /social movements. They also plan to share these research outcomes with the interested groups who are interested in similar ways. President



Ms. Daniela & Mr. Stefano from Italy interacting with members

WWF briefed them about the whole process of Working Women's Forum (India) from its initiation to its present activities that has enhanced the entrepreneurial activities of women leading to successful business by helping themselves to generate income and self-respect, thus facilitating their families to come out of poverty. At the end of the interview with the president, WWF they asked what would be her message for the upcoming generation. Responding to this president, WWF said the younger generation should take up continuous education of the urban/rural men/women besides educating them on emerging issues/problems. The researchers also visited the cooperative bank and training program to have an in-depth knowledge of the functioning of WWF/ICNW. They learned more by directly interacting with the members particularly in learning about their occupations and family background.

Ms. Aerika Mittal from Teach India, part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of the Times Group, New Delhi visited WWF on December 1, 2015. As WWF being an NGO Ms. Aerika wanted WWF to promote volunteerism to impart spoken English skills to the underprivileged youths to enhance their employability. During interaction Dr. Jaya Arunachalam said while Teach India programme is certainly essential, it is not so much important in southern parts of India as it has better environment in terms of education and employment particularly in the English language than Northern parts of India. On the other hand, President, WWF suggested if Times Group can think of assisting women towards skill development and income generation activities that would be more

helpful and asked Ms. Aerika to pass on this message to her seniors. To quote Ms. Aerika "It's lovely to see what WWF is doing and it's nice to hear stories of women's empowerment. May be in future when our ideas collide we can work together".

Mr. Ben Mathew, Sales Director, Global Partnerships, Greenlight planet accompanied by his colleague Mr. S. Kuppuraj visited on December 30, 2015 towards possible partnership with WWF for distribution of sun king solar products to the people both in urban and rural areas. They explained the usefulness and demonstrated different types products that can last for 15 to 45 hours and the battery has a long life as it is made up of lithium ferro phosphate. The President WWF said they can demonstrate the products to staff/field organizers from all the branches sometime in the year 2016 in a workshop that could be conducted in Chennai to create awareness among the women further she added that the poor women entrepreneurs have to be convinced to buy these products as they would rather pay for electricity bill than spend on this, as they are accustomed to it.



Mr. Ben Mathew & Mr. Kuppuraj demonstrating the solar product

ACTIVITIES IN WWF/ICNW



Second & Third PMRC Meeting of NABARD and WWF/ICNW

The Second Project Monitoring and Review committee (PMRC) meeting of NABARD and the Working Women's Forum (India)/Indian Cooperative Network for Women took place on July 27, 2015 at the premises of WWF, Chennai. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Jaya Arunchalam, President WWF; Mr. Mitra, DGM NABARD and Mr. Vinod Kumar, Chief Manager, Syndicate Bank. This meeting was to review the progress of loan sanctioned by NABARD to WWF/ICNW to facilitate the rural women entrepreneurs of Tamil Nadu. The NABARD officials wanted to know about the district-wise disbursement and also verified loan disbursement in ICNW and were pleased with it.

Similarly, the Third Project Monitoring and Review committee (PMRC) meeting was held on September 25, 2015. This meeting was chaired by President WWF; Dr. Nandini Azad, President ICNW; Mr. Vinod Kumar, Chief Manager, Syndicate Bank; Mr. T.K.George, AGM and Mr. Arul Raj, Manager from NABARD. Dr. Jaya Arunachalam briefed the progress of the project and emphasized that ICNW was very selective in providing NABARD loans to good members. Dr. Nandini Azad highlighted the need for grant assistance for capacity building for the grassroots members. The NABARD officials indicated that a separate communication may be forwarded in this regard.



Mr. Arul Raj, Manager NABARD visited Adiramapattinam, fisher women's village in Tamil Nadu on November 6, 2015. He was given a warm welcome by the staff and members of WWF/ICNW. The staff handed over the list of beneficiaries who have been assisted through NABARD loan and this was also cross checked in the systems. Mr. Arul Raj directly interacted with the members who attended in the meeting in the office about their occupation, loan size and usefulness of loan amount. He was equally interested to know about the collection procedures and was anxious to know about the various types of training given to members. Besides, he visited the areas and met the members of different occupations.



Mr. Arul Raj, Manager, NABARD at field visit in Adiramapattinam

NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

President's visit and participation in seminars/conferences

As a member of National Council for Cooperative Training Committee Dr. Jaya Arunachalam, President, WWF participated in it's 58th meeting held on July 3, 2015 at New Delhi. Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, Chairman, NCCT extended a warm welcome to all the members of the committee. The Secretary NCCT appraised the members about the achievements of NCCT during current financial year 2015-16. Dr. Jaya Arunachalam expressed that apart from the regular training programs of NCCT some programs should be conducted for the younger group of cooperators otherwise the cooperative will become extinct after the present generation.

IFFCO Foundation organized a workshop on "Strengthening Cooperatives in Tamil Nadu" organized on August 3, 2015 in Chennai where Dr. Jaya Arunachalam was invited as guest speaker. The workshop was inaugurated by Smt. Santha Sheela Nair, IAS, (Retd) Vice Chairperson, State Planning Commission, Tamil Nadu; Shri. B.S. Nakai, Chairman, IFFCO, presided over the workshop. The other guest speakers included Shri. J.N.L. Srivastava, IAS



President, WWF at IFFCO workshop, Chennai

(Retd), Managing Trustee, IFFCO Foundation. Dr. Jaya Arunachalam stressed the importance of women's cooperatives by citing the initiative of Indian Cooperative Network for Women promoted by Working Women's Forum (India) through the collective consciousness and collective action that has enhanced the lives of micro-entrepreneurs financially and socially and have made cooperative as a way of life.

As an old student of Queen Mary College, Dr. Jaya Arunachalam participated the Alumnae Association Annual General Body Meeting on September 28, 2015 in Chennai. The president of QMC gave the welcome address and the secretary and treasurer highlighted about the annual and audit report.

To monitor the functioning of the Bidar branch in Karnataka President WWF undertook the tour on November 2, 2015. At the outset, a meeting was arranged in the office premises on November 3, 2015 where over 25 women entrepreneurs attended the meeting. They were involved in various occupations like rearing cow, goat, vegetables, fast food items, petty shop etc. while interacting with the members president, WWF encouraged them to improve their business as hard work alone will transform their lives. Further, president, WWF said Bidar being a drought prone area the members should spread the message to other poor women so that they too can benefit.

Similarly, President, WWF interacted with the women members in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh on November 4, 2015. Around 75 women members attended the meeting that included both old and new. Many members were happy that people like president, WWF started an organization like this for the upliftment of poor women. Besides the members were happy that

this organization is helpful to them by not only rendering them financial assistance for micro-entrepreneurship but also many other services like insurance etc. 

Dr. Nandini Azad, President, ICNW held a meeting on August 31, 2015 with the CEOs. In this meeting various internal affairs of the cooperative was discussed. The other subjects figured in the meeting are the performance of the branches and the staff. The CEOs were asked a detailed report on this. Similarly another meeting was organized on September 26, 2015 where Dr. Nandini Azad, President, ICNW was congratulated by all the staff of ICNW for having

been nominated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development as the Vice Chairperson of GB and sub-committee of Rastriya Mahila Kosh for its restructuring and revitalization. Also the membership of the branches and other details of ICNW were discussed.

After the disastrous rain/flood described as heaviest in the recent 100 years in Chennai and its surrounding places, a meeting was called on December 11, 2015 by the President, ICNW to know about the situation of the members in the slums who were affected. Also the discussion focused on how to facilitate the affected members. 

TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN WWF/ICNW

A two day refresher training programme for the cooperative staff was organized by Indian cooperative Network for Women with financial assistance from National Cooperative Union of India on July 31 & August 1, 2015. This training programme offered the new staff an opportunity to increase their confidence, update their knowledge and skill towards performing better in their tasks. Nearly 30 staff from 14 branches from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka participated in the programme.

At the outset, the programme was started by paying tribute to Dr. Abdul Kalam, former President who passed away on July 27, 2015. Ms. Punithavathy, IES Assistant Director, MSME, Chennai inaugurated the training programme and said women have innate power and they must utilize their talent fully. She further urged the trainees to have positive approach in life and prioritize their time accordingly. Mr. S. Dharmaraj, Faculty Member, Institute of Cooperative Management, Madurai



Refresher Training Programme for Co-operative staff

in the inaugural speech quoted ICNW/WWF has made a great impact on women's empowerment and he was fortunate to meet the great personality and inspirational legend Dr. Jaya Arunachalam.

Mr. Dharmaraj, Faculty Member, ICM, Madurai handled the session on roles, objectives and principles of cooperatives, changing bank scenario and challenges before co-operative bank. He also spoke on the customer relationship, group dynamics, team building, conflict and time management.

Mr. Suresh Babu AGM, TNSC Bank (retd.)

explained about the credit investigation techniques, roles & responsibilities of credit staff, branch as profit center, business development plan, legal and non-legal measures for recovery management.

Mr. M.S. Anand, Programme Director & Head Computer Centre, Anna Institute of Management, Chennai handled the interesting topic on internet, e-mail and VPN connection

The trainees felt the training programme was very useful as they were acquainted with the functioning of the cooperatives and it has enlightened them to work as a team. 



The National Co-operative Development & Advisory Council Ltd. (NACDAC), was newly initiated in the state of Uttar Pradesh to conceptualize the ultimate cooperative development with effective coordination, orientation and to disseminate right kind of informations to different stakeholders of cooperative at the grassroots. As one of the senior advisors of NACDAC Dr. Jaya Arunachalam, president, WWF wanted to know what kind of progress NACDAC has achieved in their programs from its initiation of six months ago. Accordingly, NACDAC from Ghaziabad

has informed at the outset that they have initiated a Women's Empowerment Program in Kandhoola village of Hapur district, UP for the upliftment of women particularly the marginalized. In other places they have conducted a model workshop for Policy Modernization for the upcoming young co-operators besides few training programs on capacity building & digitalization of cooperatives in northern parts of India. NACDAC has also conducted a public meeting by inviting eminent stalwarts from various cooperative sectors to share their experiences/knowledge and the program turned out to be a milestone in the NACDAC's journey. The team was equally delighted to see the popularity of its programs among young volunteers & admirers to spread the message of NACDAC's mission. It is heartening to see that within a short period NACDAC has also appointed several consultants to various Cooperative Societies who needed advice for their activities. To mention few of them who are being facilitated are National Federation of Tourism & Transport Co-operative of India Ltd., Ajpa Parishad Sehkar Awas Samiti Ltd., Ghaziabad Urban Co-operative Bank Ltd., Swatantra Vihar Sehkar Awas Samiti Ltd., etc. NACDAC also associates itself with various cooperatives to make it a smart organization by enabling them through technology and skill based education programs. For better functioning they have started programs such as Cooperative Tutor's Bureau (CTB), Home Chef's Cooper (HCC) and Cooperative Security Services (CSS). Besides they have also applied for Multi-state recognition in the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operation under the Multi-state Cooperative Societies Act 2002.

WWF/ICNW RELIEF WORKS AT THE GROUND



Having faced disastrous rain/floods earlier, once again Working Women's Forum (India)/Indian Cooperative Network for Women acted swiftly by entering the many affected areas of the Chennai and Kanchipuram caused by floods. The staff/field workers being familiar with the locations visited the affected areas to meet the members directly to assess the damage caused by the floods and to know their immediate requirements.

The disastrous rain caused severe damage to the living/working conditions of working poor particularly their basic entrepreneurial activities that provides them livelihood. To go into details most of the members lost their valuables, livestock, business equipment, children's books and important documents too besides causing damages to house. Children have not been able to attend schools for many days as most of the schools were relief centers for flood affected victims. In this hour of crisis Working Women's Forum (India)/Indian Cooperative Network for Women did not leave them alone but stood with them in solidarity. The staff also offered them emotional support to restore their lives/activities back. Later, WWF/ICNW focused on what action

needed to be taken for the deserved/needy members who lost everything.

At the outset, WWF/ICNW also addressed the grievances of affected members to the concerned authorities like district collector to enable them to get facilitation for construction of houses and compensation for the lost valuables such as cows, goats, poultries, weaving equipment, etc.

In this process special mention has to be made to other branches of WWF/ICNW as well especially Andhra Pradesh branches for mobilizing the relief materials on their own.

On December 19, 2015 the President, WWF accompanied by the ICNW CEO, Chennai head quarters visited the Kancheepuram to assess the damage caused by the rain to the members. The president witnessed the dismal conditions of women and spoke to them about the earlier disasters. While walking along the Palar River, president, WWF was saddened to see that despite severe damages caused by the floods to the property and valuables the river has not retained any water due to the fact that the rivers were neither desilted nor the bunds strengthened. She also distributed relief aid to the affected members from nearly 30 areas such as Avakuttai, CSM Thoppu, Krishnan Street, Mottur, Bharati Nagar, etc. The president emotionally assured them that WWF/ICNW will always stand hand-in-hand with them until they overcome such crisis.

Similarly on December 26, 2015 a team from ICNW/WWF distributed relief materials in the affected areas such as Naduvankarai, Kallukuttai, M.M. Garden and many other areas in South, North and Central Chennai.



GROOTS



*Hope this year unfolds
Many pleasant
Surprises day by day and adds
Beautiful memories...
Wishing you a year full of
Success and joy.
Happy New Year*



WE NEED YOUR INPUTS!!!

Letters, Ideas, Comments for our Newsletter

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What readers says about GROOTS

It was a great pleasure to read about the programme developments of WWF

Gerald W.R. Lugtenberg
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My friends and myself wait eagerly to read the newsletter GROOTS.

K. Guna Sekar
Zamin Uthukuli, Pollachi

Read your newsletter GROOTS with much interest.

G. Ragupathy
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