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SALT OF THE EARTH
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saltseller



A Message from the Editor

A warm welcome to this edition of Saltseller and six months on, we have lots of positive news and progress to share with you!

I recently visited the partners and as ever I was impressed at all the hard work and dedication of all the teams fighting for better living conditions for their communities. Together we have impacted so many people's lives and I will talk more about this on page 2.

In this edition we are excited to launch a campaign to collect funds for a rural development centre for one of our partners, MASARD.

MASARD need the centre to run all their development initiatives and it will be a game changer in terms of the additional support they are able to provide the remote communities they support.

There is more information about the campaign on page 8 and please do not hesitate to contact us for more details.

If anyone would like to send a special gift to their loved ones during the festive season then we have a fantastic range of ethical gifts to choose from! Please see page 8 for more details.

As always we are looking for ways to fundraise and raise money to be able to expand our projects and reach out to even more people.

If you have any new fundraising ideas for 2018 then please do let us know. Together we can make a huge difference.

Wishing you all a very happy new year,

Reena



Reena's Trip to Tamil Nadu



Last August I travelled to Tamil Nadu to meet SOTE's project partners and visit the projects we support. Despite going to India frequently, arriving in India is quite a shock to the system, the number of people, all the colours, smells, the rickshaws and general hustle and bustle provides a constant source of distraction for all the senses!

All our partner projects are in rural areas just outside of Chennai and Bangalore. Because of the proximity, the disparity between urban and rural life is very clear. 903 million people live in the rural areas and account for 68% of the population. The reality is that these people are earning 30-40 rupees (£0.35 - £0.47) a day while a relatively small minority are riding the wave of the Indian economic boom.

We can all do something to change this and this is exactly what our wonderful partners are doing every day, changing people's lives and trying to support rural communities one step at a time. Our partners have an excellent relationship with communities and involve people from the start, asking what they need and their opinion, as well as of course how things could be done better once projects are implemented.

Alongside the child, village and tree sponsorship, we have kicked off a three-year health project and a programme testing adolescent girls for anaemia. Poor access to healthcare in the villages and the fact that people can't afford the bus fare to go to the cities mean that women do not go to the doctors or health clinics regularly and so these projects make a big difference.

I was fortunate to see a health camp and a cancer screening bus that saw 125 women in one day. Following the results, appointments and transport is provided to any follow up appointments needed.

I was also there to see the new anaemia testing kit. This was suggested by Simon, one of our Trustees, who suggested this equipment as a cost-effective way to get accurate results. Low iron is very common in India and can be treated easily if people are aware of it and so this project will help reduce anaemia and improve the health and energy of many young girls in the community.

A very kind UK sponsor funded a water project at MASARD and I was there for the inauguration, which was a wonderful celebration. Everyone was so happy to be able to get clean water and eagerly wanted to fill up their water cans! Clean water is a basic need and we will continue to do our best to address this through our work.

A final highlight for me was a sharing session between CARE and CRUSADE, two of our partners, that are located just outside of Chennai. We spent the day together and I saw how much knowledge and experience was shared on many different topics, for example, how to deal with the local government, what trees to plant as well as womens self-help groups. I hope that next year we are able to organise a partner forum whereby more of this can be done.

These were just a few of my impressions from my trip. Please do get in touch if you would like to see more pictures and hear more about the projects.

Reena Agarwal, Chief Executive Officer

A SOTE Pilot Project - Identifying and Reducing Anaemia



SOTE have always supported innovative projects which address the needs of those living in rural poverty. In September, we started a pilot project with CRUSADE which aims to help 100 adolescent girls to identify if they are suffering from anaemia and offer treatment and guidance.

India has the highest rate of anaemia in the world and this affects 55% of the country's female population. Anaemia is the most common nutritional deficiency disorder and while it is both preventable and treatable, adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to it and are at higher risk of mortality. The lack of access to healthcare combined with the lack of knowledge of anaemia means that adolescent girls are not being diagnosed and are not receiving the necessary treatment. This causes weakness, fatigue and a lack of energy which in turn hinders their development and ability to advance with their education.

CRUSADE will use portable haemoglobin analysers to provide an instant and accurate diagnosis of anaemia. The girls who receive a positive diagnosis will be provided with the necessary support on a case by case basis. This pilot project will create awareness of anaemia and encourage other adolescent girls to seek treatment.

The pilot project will be monitored closely by a Medical Officer and CRUSADE's field staff. There will be monthly meetings with the adolescent girls participating in the pilot and testing will be carried out every quarter. SOTE plan to expand this project to reach more adolescent girls in 2018 if the trial goes well.

Increasing Awareness of Health and Providing Healthcare in Tamil Nadu, India



Improving levels of health within rural villages has always been a focal point of our work. India's rural communities continue to suffer from inaccessible, poor primary healthcare. India's healthcare centres lack equipment, medicines, doctors and nurses.

Following a consultation with the local community, CRUSADE found that government run primary healthcare centres were a considerable distance from villages, leaving people without reliable and regular access to healthcare. Members of the community expressed the need for better primary healthcare that is more accessible, reliable and appropriate for their needs.

Building on SOTE's experience of delivering health projects, SOTE and CRUSADE worked together to design a three year health project which is now being delivered in 80 villages and will reach 50,000 people. The project aims to increase access to healthcare, improve levels of health, and improve basic health knowledge within the villages.

The project combines four different activities: the delivery of health camps for diagnosis and treatment; training women on sanitation, women's health, prevention of sickness and diseases; delivery of nutrition & herbal workshops and a school health programme. The project started in April 2017 and SOTE and CRUSADE are pleased with the results so far.

CRUSADE's village level health (VLH) volunteers were given training by a doctor on modules they then delivered within the communities and in the first six months of the project, 530 women from 24 villages received the first batch of training. Three eye camps were conducted in collaboration with Agarwal's Eye Hospital in Chennai and 123 people were screened. Of those, 22 people required cataract operations and 32 people were provided with glasses. In addition 14 blood pressure and diabetes camps were held where 441 people attended. Out of these 89 were diagnosed with high blood pressure and 36 with diabetes. 97% of those suffering from high blood pressure and diabetes have been prescribed medication and further advice.

Case Study - Porselvi



Porselvi is a CRUSADE village level health volunteer. As a health volunteer, Porselvi provides health education and referral services in villages. Porselvi told SOTE "I have given health training to self help group members, using health education modules. I feel good that the members listen to what I am teaching them and they ask questions to me about their health. If I am not able to answer their queries, I will consult CRUSADE's doctor and clarify their doubts in the next session. People often know the names of diseases but they don't know the symptoms and causes. I help educate them so they can differentiate between the symptoms and causes of the disease to seek early treatment. They also pass on their knowledge to their children, neighbours, and the wider community."

Fundraise for Salt of the Earth in 2018

Spring

Time for a spring clean? Host a garage sale and donate your proceeds. For World Book Day, ask your child's school to host a non-uniform day featuring their favourite characters. Finally, in May organise a good old-fashioned dance in your town hall. This has proved to be a success in the past for SOTE!

Summer

The summer months are a perfect time to fundraise. Get sponsored to cycle or walk everywhere you go for a week or even a month! Organise a BBQ and invite your friends. Why not organise a cake sale in your workplace?

Autumn

As Halloween approaches, organise a scary dinner party and pumpkin carving with friends. For Diwali, light up your home for the festival of light with friends and for bonfire night, organise a fireworks event for SOTE.

Winter

In the winter organise Christmas carols or sell mince pies to friends and colleagues? In the new year, dust off your running shoes and sign up for a 10k or a half marathon? For Valentine's day, organise some speed dating and sell tickets in advance!

Fundraising Events in 2017

Throughout 2017, SOTE supporters have held a variety of fundraising events. Earlier in the year, Billie, Paul, and Lena organised a casino night; Peter and Jane held fundraising dinners at local curry restaurants; Anne, Murray, and Janet held garden parties; Celia and friends hosted stalls; and Tom ran a marathon. At SOTE, we want fundraising events to bring people together to find out more about our work. All of these fundraising events raise vital money for SOTE's work in India, but most importantly, everyone involved has fun!

What can your support fund?

Raising £100 at a dinner party for SOTE could pay for three health camps and create access to healthcare.

It could also provide 10 training sessions for women on health, nutrition, and the prevention of diseases. The money you raise will have a direct impact on reducing levels of poverty in Tamil Nadu, India.

How to get involved?

To organise your own fundraising event pick an idea and fix the date early. Set up your fundraising page on EveryDayHero or ask SOTE to send you sponsorship forms. Spread the word and ask all your friends and family for support. But remember, the most important thing is to enjoy it! If you want to talk about fundraising for Salt of the Earth please call Tom Edwards, Development Officer, on 0117 916 6597 or email him at tom@sote.org.uk.

News from our Partners

THE CARE FOUNDATION

Community Development Centre



Currently CARE are working to establish their first community development centre (CDC) that will serve families from the begging communities CARE work with.

The CDC aims to provide a safe space for children to study and play outside of school hours; they will be able to get hot meals, be looked after by social workers and receive additional tuition. The CDC will eventually be a space that can be used by women in the community as a part of CARE's upcoming alternative income programmes, due to start in 2018.

At the weekends the CDC centre will put on cultural and sports programmes for children to prevent them from roaming the streets unsupervised or accompanying their parents begging.

In addition to the numerous benefits to the begging communities, the CDC centre will employ 4 women from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. differently abled, widowed and rural poor).

Safe Cooking Stoves



Following a wonderful trip to visit Salt of the Earth partners CRUSADE, CARE learnt of Greenway stoves technology and bought one to test in their communities. Greenway stoves is a single-burner, high efficiency cooking stove that works on all solid biomass such as wood, dung, crop waste, and bamboo.

Greenway stoves are 'clean cookstoves', which allow those cooking on open fires to switch to a safer and faster method that reduces fuel consumption and produces far less smoke. CARE demonstrated the stove amongst the women in the communities and have introduced a payment plan for families wishing to buy a stove.

Over 30 families opted to purchase a stove for CARE and should receive them before the coming rainy season, thus allowing women to safely cook inside their homes.

SOTE offer cooking stoves as part of our ethical gift scheme. If you would like to buy a cooking stove for a family in India, please look on page 8 for more information.

MASARD

Creating Access to Safe Drinking Water



MASARD have set up a water purification plant to provide safe drinking water for communities living in rural poverty. They dug a new borewell and constructed a shed to install the plant. The plant is now functioning well and MASARD are providing safe drinking water to local villages. The waste water which is the by-product of water purification plants now irrigates a banana cultivation which benefits MASARD's supported children.

The inauguration of the water purification plant was attended by all of SOTE's sponsored children and was inaugurated in August when SOTE's Chief Executive Officer, Reena, was visiting them.

Reena said "Clean water is a basic need and so important for health and wellbeing. Due to the loyal support of a UK donor we were able to set up this project and I have no doubt of the difference it will make to thousands of people. It was wonderful to be part of the celebration and see people eagerly waiting to fill their water cans to take back to their homes".

Creating Access to Livelihoods



Over the summer, MASARD provided sustainable livelihoods to five families who were living in rural poverty. They bought two goats for selected families so that they could use them for milk and eventually sell the offspring to generate an income. These goats are expected to provide a litter every six months and each time produce more than one baby goat.

Another important programme MASARD delivered was a skills workshop for traditional potters. In the villages that MASARD work in there are a large amount of potter families and pottery has been passed down through the generations. However, pottery in India has moved away from traditional methods leaving these potters without access to the market and an income.

To build capacity of local potters, MASARD organised training on modern pottery which conducted by two experts from Bangalore and 50 local potters participated in this workshop. They brought two motorised pottery wheels to show the local potters and taught them not only how to make pots but also various other clay items such as jewellery. In the future, MASARD also plans to send more potters for specialised training in Bangalore.

CRUSADE

Renovation of a WSHG building in Minjur



CRUSADE formed their first Women's Self Help Group (WSHG) in Kaniambakkam village in Minjur in 1992. Most of the women involved at the start of the WSHG are still actively involved today.

In the initial years WSHG groups in Kaniambakkam village did not have a place to meet or to hold training. With CRUSADE's support, the WSHGs were granted land by local government. Together, the SHGs built a small building which the local government assisted by installing electricity and the flooring.

During Cyclone Vardah in December 2015, which affected Tamil Nadu, the roof of the building was blown off and the building remained disused. There are now 29 groups in the panchayat with 406 members. The WSHGs approached CRUSADE for the renovation of the building and offered to share the cost.

CRUSADE, with funding from SOTE's village sponsorship programme, renovated the building with a concrete roof which was completed in October 2017.

This was much appreciated by the community and the building will again be used for village and local government meetings and to run training workshops.

Tree Planting and Vegetable Cultivation Work



In 2017, 600 women have been involved in CRUSADE's tree planting and vegetable cultivation work. 1620 tree saplings and 2150 packets of vegetable seeds have been distributed which were used by women in their homes. The programme also promoted herbal plants in homesteads and CRUSADE trained women members how to use herbal remedies for minor illnesses.

Ragini, who is 44 years old, is from Inam Agaram village in Sholavaram block. Through SOTE's tree sponsorship scheme, Ragini received 40 packets of vegetable seeds and two coconut saplings from CRUSADE. She planted the coconut seedlings in front of her house and also grew vegetables last season. The vegetables included bottle gourd, snake gourd, bitter melon, and beans. In her first two months of harvest, after consuming some of the produce, she also earned Rs 500 by selling vegetables to friends.

She is expecting to earn Rs 1500 by the end of the season. As Ragini works in the Government Employment Guarantee scheme, unfortunately her income is irregular and not reliable, so she uses her newfound income for day to day expenses. Ragini is pleased to now be able to grow organic vegetables and have the opportunity to earn an extra income.



SOTE Appeal - Rural Development Centre

Salt of the Earth strongly believes in strengthening the capacity of the project partners in India and together, SOTE and MASARD want to build a Rural Development Centre (RDC). The RDC will be built in a strategically located place for MASARD to be closer to the community they service in Hosur, Tamil Nadu.”

MASARD’s main office based in Bangalore is 60km from their cluster of project villages. Transport costs and travel time from the main office is a huge problem that MASARD wanted to address. The current field office is difficult to access and lacks both public transport links and electricity and during the rainy season, the Ponnaiar river overflows leaving it impossible to cross. This adds a further 13km for MASARD staff when they need to visit project villages and so the proposed RDC would make a huge difference. It would be in Kamandoddi which is centrally located within the 15 project villages. This great location would allow MASARD to save time, money, and allow them to deliver even more project work!

So, what would this centre allow MASARD to do? The centre will allow us to be able to expand the number of projects we do together, allow a smoother delivery of projects and allow for effective project administration, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation. All of which can all be done under one roof.

As well as saving time and money, MASARD will be able to deliver the following activities: child counselling, medical services, after-school tuition classes, employment training programmes, self-help group meetings, adolescent girls training, and awareness programmes. It is estimated that around 10,000 people a year will benefit from MASARD’s RDC and activities.

But for the RDC centre to be built, we need your support! Any additional donations that SOTE receives from December to January will be used to fund the construction of this centre.

You can get involved by donating online on our website, by posting a cheque, or by phone. We hope you can support us and if you need any more information then please do get in contact on info@sote.org.uk or call us on 0117 916 6597.



SOTE’s Ethical Gifts

Our ethical gifts make the perfect presents to give to your friends, family or loved ones. By buying our ethical gifts, you are not only giving to the recipient, but also directly to someone in India. To buy a gift, follow these simple steps.

1. Go to www.sote.org.uk/ethical-gifts
2. Select your gift, fill in your details, and pay through our secure shop
3. You will receive a gift card in the post to write and give to your lucky recipient
4. Order before Tuesday 19th December to ensure your card arrives in time for Christmas

New Born Baby & Mother Care Kit - £22.50

This post-natal care kit will be provided to mothers who are about to deliver their child.

Small Cooking Stove - £20.00

This gift will pay for one family in Tamil Nadu to receive a smart cooking stove.

Medical Check-up for an Elder - £15.00

This gift will pay for an elder to have a full medical check up and also receive a thick blanket for the monsoon.

The Gift of Sight - £12.50

This gift will pay for an eye test, a cataract referral and glasses for someone in Tamil Nadu..

Gift of Trees - £10.00

This gift protects the environment and also increases nutritional security.

If you have any questions about buying an ethical gift from Salt of the Earth this Christmas then contact Tom Edwards on tom@sote.org.uk or 0117 916 6597.