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1. State Level Conference for Dalit and Adivasi Panchayat Presidents
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Brief Note:
Social Awareness Society for Youths (SASY) is a registered voluntary organisation working for the rights of the vulnerable, oppressed and marginalized communities since 2004. SASY is focusing on 6 thematic areas which include Access to Justice, Strengthening Local Government, Child Rights Initiatives, Dalit women leadership, Livelihood Promotions and Social Inclusion in Disaster Responses.

SASY is primarily engaged in protecting and promoting the rights of Dalit and Adivasi communities and working in 4 districts namely Villupuram, Cuddalore, Erode, Tirupur and Coimbatore Districts. SASY had responded to the incidents of caste atrocities along with professionals lawyers, special public prosecutors to access justice to the survivors of caste atrocities.
State Level Conference for Dalit and Adivasi Panchayat Presidents:

India is a country which has largest democratic republic in the world. The local self–government, an important system in which people participate, had existed since before independence. After independence the constitution was amended and panchayats were formed; the execution of powers and responsibilities were given to them.

The ultimate objective and purpose of the Panchayat Raj Act is to devolve powers. The local self-government is governed by the people and is very strong and powerful. This gives the elected representatives the right to govern themselves. It was everyone hopes that the new law will create greatest social change but the first general election held in 1996 completely shattered it. The caste patriarchy and caste social structure led to the denial of political powers to the Dalits, Adivasis & Women ensured by the Constitution.

SASY is continuously working to empower Dalit and Tribal Panchayat leaders. Presently, the panchayat elections, which have not been held for the last three years, were held in the 28 districts and not held in 9 districts. As the panchayat election for the remaining districts was about to be held and the Quarantine curfew announced due the sudden outbreak of COVID 19 Pandemic halted the activity.

In this context, SASY had jointly organised “State Level Conference for Dalit and Adivasi Panchayat Presidents” along with Human Resource Development Forum (HRDF), National Adivasi Solidarity Counsel (NASC), Social Watch and National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), New Delhi through virtual meeting on August 12, 2020.

110 Dalit and Adivasi panchayat presidents were capacitated on strengthening the local self-government; special powers for the panchayats (local self-governments), separate projects, social audits, empowering Dalit and Adivasi women panchayat leaders and empowering the local self–government into a powerful separate body. At the end of the conference around 13 decisions were taken and it was decided to form a federation for Dalit and Adivasi Panchayat Presidents.

Rebuilding the National Coalition on SCP TSP Legislation – Tamil Nadu Chapter:

The Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub Plan was formulated in the year 1970 mainly to uplift the Dalit and Adivasi Communities who are continuously subjected to various forms of social exclusions and caste discrimination.

In the year 2010. It was decided to bring a national legislation on the Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub Plan and the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) as a leading organization and it was decided to form a national level coalition on bringing a legislation on the Special component plan and Tribal Sub Plan (SCP TSP) and this coalition is functioning at the national level. Meantime, a state legislation on SCSP TSP was introduced in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana respectively. SASY jointly organized State Level Consultations, Meetings for bringing a state legislation on SCP TSP in Tamil Nadu and in 2014, we have organized a demonstration for bringing a state legislation on SCP TSP.

SASY along with other organizations work collectively on rebuilding the campaign for advocacy in bringing a state legislation on SCSP TSP. Recently the core committee members had meeting on September 3, 2020 and the core committee members including Dr. V. A. Ramesh Nathan – Director, SASY & General Secretary – NDMJ, NCDHR, Mr. N. Paul Divakar, General Secretary, Global Advocacy and Network- NCDHR, Ms. Beena Pallical, General Secretary, DAAA-NCDHR, Dr. Krishnan, National Convener, NASC, Fr.Kumar, Executive Director, Social Watch, Dr.Christdas Gandhi, Former Additional Chief Secretary, Tamilnadu, Mr.N.Dayalan, Executive Director, HRDF, Rev. Dr.Vincent Manoharan, National Convener, NDCW, Mr. Murugappan, State Coordinator, SASY and Dr. Richard Devadoss, Director, CORNERSTONE participated in the virtual meeting. At the end it was unanimously decided to by the Tamil Nadu core committee to take forward the advocacy initiatives by submitting the draft bill for Tamil Nadu to the Chief Ministers, Political Party leaders and Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

and it was also decided that SASY will be functioning as the Secretariat office, Ms. Beena Pallical will be the National Convener for SCP TSP and Dr. Richard Devadoss will be the State Convener for Tamil Nadu.
**Training for CRC Facilitators & CRC Functioning:**

SASY’s Children Resource Centres (CRC) is functioning in 25 villages and due to the sudden outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic the centres were shut down. On 29th and 30th of September 2020 the CRC centres in 25 villages were inaugurated and the children were capacitated on the safety and preventive measures of COVID 19.

SASY’s CRC centres are functioning on daily basis for two hours in the morning even in the lock down days with the specified safety measures of the government. 90% of the children are studying in government schools where they do not have online classes and hence SASY’s CRC facilitators are assisting the children to acquire knowledge on languages, math, science and social studies.

**Inaugural of CRC centres:**

Dalit and Adivasi children are subjected to various kinds of caste-based discriminatory practices, boycott and oppression in schools. Affected as they are by these cruelties at a very young age, they bear the pain of these practices well into adulthood. Many students discontinue their studies on account of the violence they are forced to endure.

SASY is running “Children Resource Centre” for Dalit and Adivasi children in Cuddalore District since 2007 to combat caste-based discriminations and oppressions in schools and promoting the right to survival, development, participation and protection. The CRC centres are functioning with the assistance of CRC facilitators. Around 30 CRC facilitators were capacitated through virtual meeting on September 24, 2020 on the perspectives of human rights, child rights for effective functioning at the CRC Centres.

**Impact of COVID on Higher Education:**

It is a nationwide study organized by National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), New Delhi to study the Impact of COVID – 19 on Higher Education. SASY is coordinating the study at the State Level and around 40 College Students have been selected as volunteers to conduct the Survey. The survey was completed in September 2020 and the findings of the study will be released in the upcoming news letter.
The caste-based atrocities take place every hour across India. At least two Dalits are assaulted every hour, and every day, three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits are murdered and two Dalit homes are torched on average. Over 200 million Dalits, who comprise nearly 17% of India’s population, face the threat of such violence daily.

Though the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) (SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989, Classifies caste – based crimes as non-bailable and requires the immediate arrest of offenders. A vast gap remains between crime and conviction rates. The increase in the crimes and low conviction rates which reflects the continuing silence on caste – based crimes in India. This dangerous silence allows the dominant caste perpetrators a sense of impunity to kill attack and rape the SCs and STs.

The 2019 NCRB report on atrocities against Dalit and Adivasis clearly shows that the atrocities against SCs and STs have increased by 7.3% and 24.6% in 2019. The cases of rape against SC women are 7.5%; a total of 62195 cases of atrocities against SCs and STs 10878 were pending for investigation including the cases of the previous year. The conviction percentage under the SCs and STs (PoA) Act in concurrence with IPC remains at 32.1% for SCs and 26.4% for STs.

SASY has monitored 12 forms of caste based atrocities against Dalits and Tribals in these lockdown days and also legally following the old cases with the concerned authorities, government departments and judiciary. The following table depicts the status of atrocity cases in the last 3 months. The types of offences includes brutal murders, attempt to murder, brutal attack, untouchability practices & Caste Discrimination against Dalits & Tribals, property destruction, defamation of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s portrait, denial in performing duties of Dalit & Tribal panchayat presidents & death of manual scavengers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dalit Human Rights Monitoring</th>
<th>April 2020 – September 2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Fact Findings</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of FIR registered</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Complaints sent to concern authorities</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Accused persons Arrested</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications Submitted under Rule 4 (5) for Gaining SPPs</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Compensation Received by Survivors</td>
<td>INR 50,00,000/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addressing Caste Based Atrocities against Manual Scavengers:

Somasundaram resident of Chekarakudi North Street, near Tuticorin District and 4 persons namely Isakiraja (17), Balakrishnan (20), Pandi (28) and Dinesh (20) from Tirunelveli District went to Somasundaram house for cleaning the septic tanks on 2nd July 2020. The above mentioned 4 persons first made the motor machine to take away the drainage water. After completely draining the water, Isakiraja and Dinesh got into the septic tank for cleaning the drainage substance which was sediment down the tank.

Within few minutes, they both got fainted after inhaling the in-toxic gases emitted from the septic tank.

Balakrishnan who was watching this immediately got into the tank to rescue them. But he also was intoxicated by the obnoxious gases. Finally Pandi went into the tank and he also fainted by inhaling the gases. This was informed to the Fire Service Department, they rushed to the spot and they took all the four persons from the tank. They found that the 4 persons were dead by inhaling the intoxicated gases emitted from the septic tank. The Thattaparai Police came to the spot and took the 4 deceased persons for post mortem to Tuticorin Government Hospital.

FIR was registered with the crime no: 163/2020 u/s 288, 304 IPC r/w sec 8 and 9 Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their rehabilitation act 2013 r/w 3(1)(j) of SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989. Based on the verdict of Supreme Court in 2014, the Tamil Nadu Government had provided Rs. 10 lakhs to each deceased family from the Chief Minister Relief Fund.

SASY had made specific recommendations in providing compensation under the SC/ST PoA Amendment Act, providing other rehabilitative measures to the deceased family members, as they have lost their sole bread winner of the family.
Best Practices:

Case No: 1

Clash between Chellaperumpulimedu dominant caste youths and Dalit youths in Puliyarabakkam led to the mass attack, murder of Dalit youth named Venkatesan, property destruction and social boycott against Dalits. SASY’s DHRD had made continuous engagements with the concerned departments and followed the case with the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department in these lock down days. Finally the deceased Venkatesan’s brother Adhikesavan was provided government job on 07.07.2020 as Junior Assistant in Panchayat Union Office, Anakavur of Tiruvannamalai District, Tamil Nadu under the provisions of Contingency Plan 2017 of SC/ST PoA Act focusing on the Relief and Rehabilitative Measures for the Survivors of Caste Atrocities.

Case No: 2

Irulapoo Selvakumar belonged to the Irular Caste (Sub Caste of Scheduled Tribes) and resident of Ariyalur District. He is human rights defender working for the betterment of Dalits and Adivasi communities. On 09.05.2020 he along with his son was on their way to Devanoor and they were brutally attacked by the dominant caste persons. He was also subjected to derogatory forms of verbal abuse and was discriminated in public view. The caste mob also threatened him not to engage in the social activities and on promoting the rights of Dalit and Adivasi communities. SASY had immediately intervened in the case and had sent complaints to the concerned authorities. The police had arrested the two accused persons namely Selvaiah and Raja Durai. The survivor was provided the FIR stage compensation of Rs. 75,000/- and the charge sheet was framed within 60 days (SC No: 54/2020). SASY was able to implement the provisions of the SC/ST PoA Act even in the lockdown days and assisting the survivors to access the criminal justice system.

Case No: 3

Two Dalits of Muthaliapet village was engaged in Manual Scavenging and on 20.08.2020 as they were cleaning the sewage canals the emission of toxic gases led to suffocation and the two persons died inside the canal. SASY had immediately undertaken fact finding in the incident in the lock down days. It had also engaged with the police authorities in altering the FIR with the appropriate sections of SC/ST PoA Act at Vishnu Kanchi PS. The deceased family members were provided Rs. 10 lakhs each and 5 accused persons were arrested in the case. SASY was able to meticulously follow the case proceedings and provide legal assistance to the deceased family members in these lock down days.
Update on the Writ Petition Filed at Chennai High Court on implementing the recommendations of the Study Report on the alleged cases of Police Atrocities against the Kuravan Community (Scheduled Caste) in Tamil Nadu:

The British colonial regime had labelled various castes, tribals in India under habitual offenders. It is where the male above the age of 10 years are bound to sign, place their fingerprints in the register at the nearby police stations on daily evening and have to stay at the police station the whole night. Also they have to get prior permission from the police station if they are going away from their home town for any marriage and death ceremonies. Though the Habitual Offenders Act was repealed soon after the Independence the situation did not reduce.

The Kuravan community members had filed a joint petition on 02.09.2014 to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) regarding the continuous police brutality, atrocity and violence against the Kuravan communities. Following to this, the NCSC had constituted a three member committee on 29.10.2014. Mr. Ramasamy – Director, National Commission for Scheduled Castes - Tamil Nadu, Dr. V. A. Ramesh Nathan – Human Rights Defender and Adv. P.S. Ajeetha – Chennai High Court. The study committee had undertaken research on the police atrocity on Kuravan communities.

The three member committee carried out their study for about one month and submitted the study report to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), New Delhi in March 2015. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), New Delhi had sent the study report to the Hon’ble President of India on 16.08.2016. But the Hon’ble President of India has not yet sent it to the Parliament. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), New Delhi had also sent the study report to the Tamil Nadu Government.

The Tamil Nadu Government did not take any steps on the findings and recommendations of the study committee and hence a writ petition was filed on 23.04.2017 (WP No. 16111/2017) at Chennai High Court seeking to implement the 13 recommendations stated in the study report. The case is pending investigation and the district authorities had taken steps in providing relief and rehabilitation measures to the survivors of police torture. Moreover, the District Collector had provided the first stage of compensation INR 50,000/- to Mr. Nagappan; the district administration is also taking initiatives to provide the livelihood measures to Nagappan’s family in setting up piggery farm.