

Dalit Voices Matters

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1. Introduction:

The COVID Second wave had its hit at the end of January 2021. The rise in case numbers has been exponential in the second wave and at the start of the second wave, India confirmed 11,000 cases and in the next 50 days, the daily average was around 22,000 cases. But in the following 10 days, cases rose sharply with the daily average reaching 89,800.

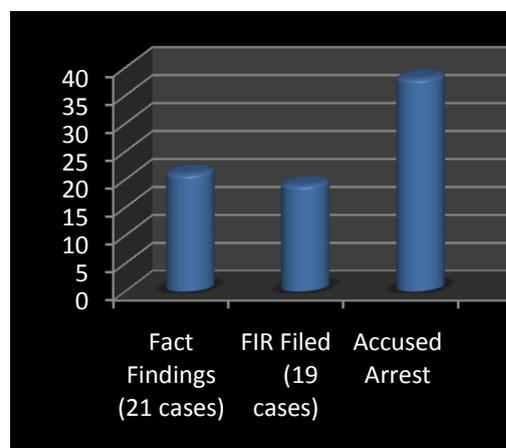
India had reported the highest number of daily cases at 233,091. This is more than 25% of daily cases reported in the world. Five states namely, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh are contributing almost 55% of total cases. In the past week 1,631,636 cases reported in country with Maharashtra reporting highest number of cases (439,266) followed by Uttar Pradesh (174,212) and Delhi (140,458). This rapid increase shows that the second wave is spreading much faster across the country.

During this pandemic situation, SASY was able to take forward human rights interventions by following the mandates of Tamil Nadu government and with the support extended by the DHRDs, team, committed advocates, CRC facilitators and women federation members.

2. Human Rights Interventions & Best Practices:

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.

SASY had undertaken 21 fact findings, FIRs filed in 19 cases and 38 accused persons arrested in 9 cases. A sum of INR 9, 00,000 has been received as interim compensation and 6 SPPs have been gained during this period.



Best Practices:

Case -1: - Twin Murder of Dalits in Erode District:

Dalit man named Boopathi (28), s/o Ramasamy resident of Kodumudi Block of Erode District. He was residing with his family members. He and his sister Menaka was subjected to heinous forms of verbal abuses and was brutally murdered by Caste Hindus.

SASY had undertaken fact finding into the brutal incident and had sent complaints to the concerned police authorities and statutory commissions. By the continuous engagement of SASY 11 accused persons were arrested and an interim compensation of INR 8.25 lakhs was provided to the deceased family members. Presently the case was followed at the Erode Sessions Court and SASY along with committed advocates providing legal assistance to the deceased family.

The prime accused Surya, Saminathan and Mathusuthan had filed bail petition; SASY found that the deceased family members, their dependents and the witnesses were twice by the accused person families and hence they are residing near Kodumudi town and Sivagiri. Hence SASY filed an intervening petition under Section 15 A of the SC/ST PoA Amendment Act in cancelling the bail petition of accused persons.

Also, SASY had filed petition seeking Special Public Prosecutor under rule 4 (5) of SC/ST PoA Act with the choice of victim and the case gained Adv. Karthikeyan as SPP. The bail petitions of the accused persons were denied 4 times by the Hon'ble Judge Murugesu on the legal grounds. SASY was able to meticulously follow the case even in the lockdown days and the accused persons are behind the bars for more the 250 days: SASY's DHRDs had faced number of difficulties, threats, challenges in following this case and travelling in the journey of accessing the criminal justice system to the survivors of caste based atrocities.

Moreover, considering the rehabilitation of the survivors' family SASY had petitioned to the District authorities under Rule 12 (4) of SC/ST PoA Act seeking land entitlements, job assistance to the deceased families. By the meticulously engagement with the district and state authorities the survivors' families was provided near Modakurichi Block of Erode District.



Dowry Harassment and Abetment to Commit Suicide:

ElumalaiS/OChinnraj, a resident of Kulathumettu Street, Melpalanandal Village, Tiruvannamalai District. He is belonged to the Irular Caste (Sub Caste of Scheduled Tribes). He is residing with his wife Kuppu, Seenuvasan (23) and daughters Vennila [name changed] (21) and Pavithra (13). He and his wife Kuppugot separated and his two children are residing with his wife.

Vennila was working in a mobile phone shop near Avalurpet. Meantime, Manikandan (23) belonged to Vanniyar caste (Most Backward Caste) of Kovilpuraiyur village, who an auto driver fell in love with Vennila. They both got married at the Arunachalar temple in Tiruvannamalai last October and came home. Later, the couple started their life in Kovilpuraiyur village. After 6 months Vennila became pregnant. A few days later Manikandan continued to bully with Vennila asking for dowry. She has been beaten and tortured. Unable to bear the torture Vennila came to her home and told about the brutal incident to her father.

Manikandan and his mother Selvi had verbally abused in filthy and derogatory language and brutally attacked her. Vennila's

father heard about the brutal incident and gave Vennila jewelry of 4 sovereigns and came home. On 23.06.2021 at around 04.30 pm Vennila's father received a phone call stating that his daughter had been hanged at their home in Kovilpuraiyur village. He immediately rushed to the said village and the villagers told that his daughter was taken to



Villupuram Mundiambakkam Government Medical College Hospital for autopsy. SASY had undertaken fact finding into the brutal incident and the complaint was lodged at the Avalurpet police station and the next day on 24.06.2021 the Villupuram RDO came and investigated about the incident and Manikandan was arrested and kept in jail. Also by the continuous engagement with the DSP the spot investigation was conducted. Also the charge sheet was framed within 30 days. Presently the case is pending before Tiruvannamalai Court.

3. SASY Executive Committee Meeting & Discussion on Emergency Policy on COVID:

Concerning to the sudden increase in COVID Second Wave, SASY had its Executive Committee Meeting through online medium in the month of April 2021. The main agenda of the meeting is discussion and approval on the emergency policy on COVID.

SASY concerning on the well-being of the community and staff has developed this emergency policy to cope with the crisis situation. This policy brings to attention key health and human rights considerations with regards to COVID-19 pandemic and highlights the importance of integrating a human rights based approach in response to COVID-19. It provides key considerations in relation to addressing caste discrimination, prevention of violence against women, support for vulnerable communities by highlighting precautionary and preventive measures in response to COVID Second Wave.

SASY came out with two major aspects of the precautionary and preventive guideline in response to COVID Second Wave for the Staff at District & State Level and for programs of SASY. The emergency policy was circulated to the board representatives, donor organisations, staff team and CRC facilitators requesting to follow safety measures and the mandates/protocols of the Tamil Nadu Government with regard to COVID.

4. COVID Response by CRC Facilitators and Women Federation:

SASY had conducted emergency meeting with the CRC facilitators and women federation leaders including the community task force, disaster risk reduction volunteers on the sudden outbreak of the COVID Second wave. The CRC facilitators and the women federation leaders ensured to furnish their respective village details with regard to COVID cases, deaths. In many cases, the SASY team along with the CRC and Women Federation provided assistance to the COVID infected persons to access the public health services and other kind of medical assistance.



As a preventive measure SASY had distributed COVID Emergency kit to the CRC centres including face mask, hand wash, sanitizer, thermometer, pulseoximetre, Dettol soap, gloves, paracip tablets, almox tablets and okacet tablets to 19 Children Resource Centres SASY along with the women federation leaders had distributed Kabasura Kudineer (resistance powder for CORONA VIRUS) for more than 1200 families in Cuddalore District.



5. Tribute to the Architect of Indian Constitution:

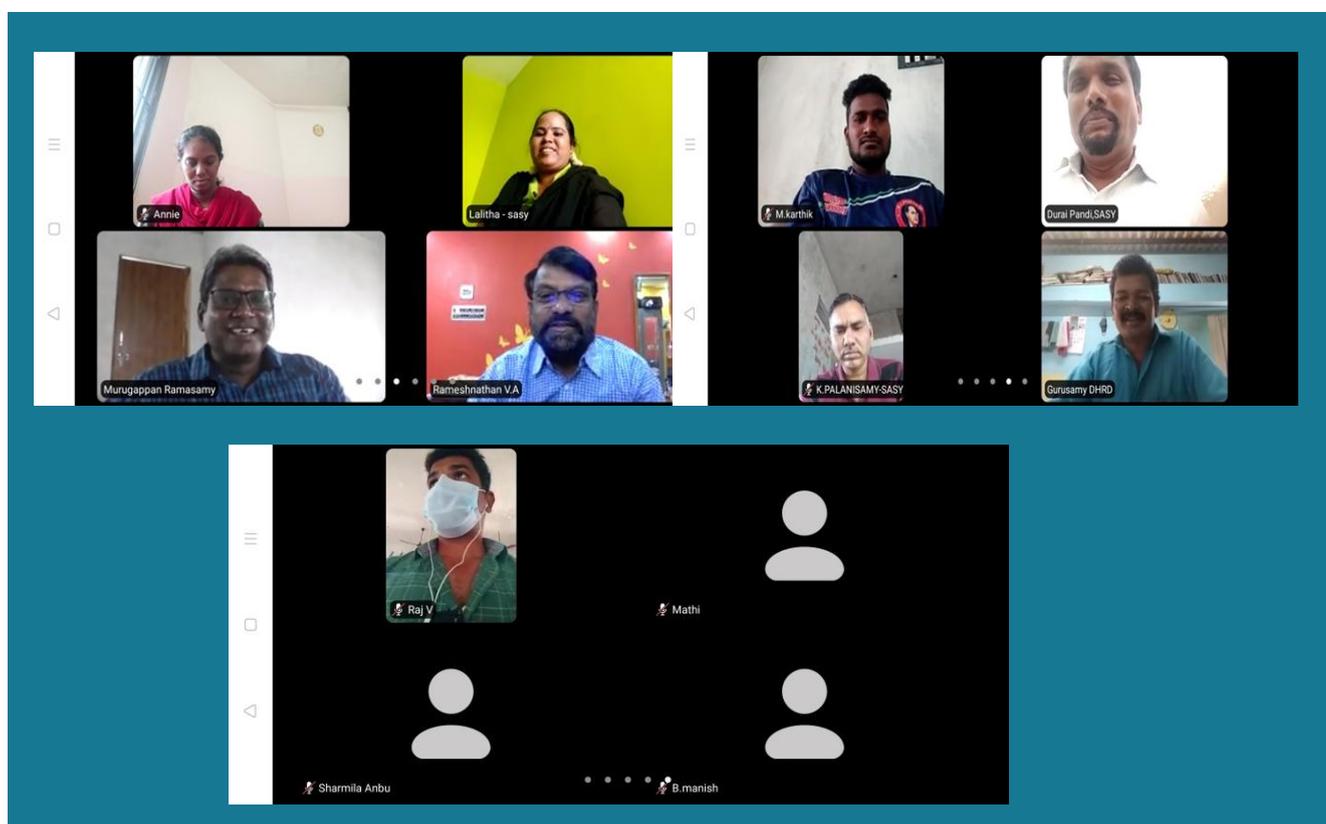
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar – the father of the Indian Constitution is India's foremost human rights activist during the 20th century. He is an emancipator, scholar & social reformer of human rights. It can be said that he is one of pioneer who toiled himself for the emancipation and empowering of the oppressed and marginalized communities.

SASY along with the staff team, Legal Resource Centre, CRC facilitators and Women Federation paid tribute to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on his 130th Birthday and ensured to strive towards the struggle to eliminate caste-based discrimination, to achieve fulfillment of human rights and for the restoration of dignity and justice.

6. Staff Review Meetings:

Due to the series of COVID lockdown, SASY had organised the periodical staff review meeting through virtual medium (ZOOM).

SASY has conducted 3 staff review meetings with an objective mainly to follow the mandate of the TN government with regard to COVID Second Wave and to review the activities carried out so far, achievements, challenges faced, evolve strategies and culminate the results. It has certainly helped to track the project implementation, overall monitoring and implementation to achieve the expected outcomes



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