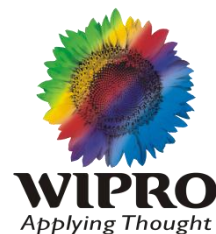


TSUNAMI TAMIL NADU, 2004



The tsunami that hit coastal India in 2004 left many to grieve, their lives were swept away in front of their eyes. The Indian Ocean tsunami killed 2,30,000 people in 2004 and those who were left behind had the daunting task of rebuilding their lives. This was when, Wipro Cares helped victims in Tamil Nadu by providing support in the areas of livelihood, education, construction of houses and building defense against any natural calamities in the future.

LIVELIHOOD

Livelihood support was an integral part of the project. Under livelihood support the following initiatives were taken up:

Agricultural land

Wipro Cares evolved a cost effective but labour intensive solution to reclaim 100.25 acres of agricultural land. This provided immediate livelihood opportunities to agricultural labourers and helped reclaim agricultural land of farmers. The top layers of dirt and muck were manually removed and deep holes were drilled for rain water to seep inside and dilute the saltiness in the soil. In the first monsoon after the tsunami, farmers successfully grew gingili and green gram here.

Plantation

The landless women in the village were encouraged to grow saplings which were purchased by Wipro Cares to create a coastal plantation.

Fishing

The fishermen community was provided with 11 boats and fishing gears that took care of 44 fishermen families.

EDUCATION

No rehabilitation is complete without addressing the needs of children. In Pushpavanam, a village in Tamilnadu, Wipro Cares added additional infrastructure to four of the existing schools catering to over 500 children. These schools needed repair, additional classrooms and toilets. In India the top most reason for girls to quit school after 7th standard is lack of toilet/sanitation facility in schools. Our aim here was to get all the children, both boys and girls, in Pushpavanam to get educated and one way of ensuring this was by building toilets and providing clean drinking water.

Vanavil Trust, based out of Sikkal, is focused on providing sustainable livelihood and education to children. It is an effort of a few young committed individuals who came together to provide relief post the disaster caused by the tsunami. These people stayed back to help communities that were left out of rehabilitation efforts because of their social status in society. Being a fringe community and hence vulnerable, the tsunami had an accentuating effect on their poverty and socio-cultural status. This group of young people decided that they would work with the vulnerable community to empower them and to help them rebuild their lives.

The involvement of Wipro Cares in this project has been in providing assistance to help the group of committed individuals organize themselves formally into a recognized body which will help them secure funding and assistance from the government and corporates. This act of spontaneous philanthropy has now evolved into a structured NGO with a charter to work on long term sustainability of the community they have chosen to work with.

Most of the target communities of the projects are Aadiyans (nomadic tribes), Narikuravar (gypsies) who subsist on selling plastic ware, beads and begging. They train children to beg in different guises from an early age. These children are taken to different places to beg on streets which, affects their education and lives. While the tsunami brought their livelihood of selling plastics to a standstill, it did not stop the main livelihood of these people, which was begging.

The Vanavil School is an attempt to stop these children from begging and to give them an opportunity to learn and explore. It is a fun school; which uses activity based learning to create a learning environment that respects their individuality, while also facilitating teamwork.

EDUCATION

Wipro Cares is fulfilling the long-term goal of a permanent residential school by supporting the construction of the building. In addition, Wipro Cares has purchased 15 acres of land which has been developed as an organic farm to provide sustenance to the school children. The school was started in 2005. In the first year it was difficult to get children to come to school, to sit for a few hours as they were used to the street life, the freedom that the street life offers, and the money they earned from begging. It took a lot of effort for one year to get them to come regularly to the school. Since 2006, there has been a rise in the number of children who come regularly to school and do not run away to beg; there has been an improvement in communication and identification skills of these children. The parents now support the school totally, and are aware that begging should be stopped.

The children spend 1/3rd of their school day in the farm, as the farm work is a component of the curriculum. It brings in a sense of ownership about the school in the children and also gives them training in an area that is directly or indirectly linked to roughly 80% jobs in rural India. To address this issue of adult livelihood, the school works with adolescents from the community to help them learn farming, carpentry and other vocational courses.

Kasturba Kanya Gurukulam

Kasturba Gurukulam is a 65 year old institution in Vedaranyam in Nagapattinam district started by Mr. Vedaratnam, a freedom fighter, who donated all his land for this institution. It is a well-known pioneering residential institution which provides vocational training, education and suitable careers to girls. It gives priority to orphans and takes care of their entire expenditure including food, accommodation, dress and books.

The gurukulam houses a primary school, higher secondary school and other vocational training units on its campus. It goes to the credit of the founder that a biogas plant using human waste and cow dung has been in use since the early years of 1950s, much before the official acceptance of non-conventional energy in the country.

The school has opted for the ancient culture of Indian education, wherein the teacher (guru) and the student live together to impart education, culture and ecumenical wisdom of virtues.

PROTECTION FROM FLOODS

The coastal tree plantation in Pushpavanam village was an insurance against the destructive recurring floods. Pushpavanam had a coastal tree cover which, to some extent, provided relief to the village during tsunami. When the tsunami hit, the trees took the brunt and the damage to the village was reduced because of this tree cover. The people wanted this tree cover to be strengthened and extended as an investment and protection for their future.

On October 1st and 2nd of 2005, Wiproites joined the people of Nagapattinam in planting 2,54,464 saplings on 47 hectares of land along the coast of Pushpavanam and Naluvedapaty. The people hold a Guinness record for the same. Today this has grown to be a dense forest along the coast and we hope that this will minimize the damage by floods in future.

CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSES

Naluvedapaty is a 'twin' village of Pushpavanam. The villagers from Naluvedapaty also participated in the coastal plantation. The community needed support to construct a few houses that were damaged by the tsunami; Wipro Cares supported them for this activity.

Wipro Cares constructed 35 earthquake and cyclone proof houses as per the government norms in Naluvedapaty.