

**COMPREHENSIVE SITUATION OF
TRIBES IN THENI DISTRICT
Tamilnadu- India**



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Preamble:

VAIGAI MAHALIR IYAKKAM-VMI is a Civil Society Development Organization (NGO) promoted in the year 1997 to work for the welfare and rights of women and farming communities in Aundipatti block Theni district. VMI is headed by woman and members are from downtrodden communities. The members of the Board derived from various disciplines of development and committed to work for the marginalized and oppressed sections of society. VMI is obtained legal status on 12th August 1997 under Societies Registration Tamilnadu Act 1975, and further obtained FCRA to receive Foreign Contribution.

From its inception onwards VMI developed and implemented many programs and schemes for women. VMI promoted Women Self-Help Groups and Federation among women SHGs. VMI is maintaining functional rapport with SHGs and it is approved by Mahalir Thittam(Tamilnadu Women Development Corporation), NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development), Banks, Department of Agriculture, Line Departments and District Administration. As on today VMI provide support and guidelines to 1125 SHGs. Apart from banking support VMI also provide financial support to SHGs in the field of organic farming, dairy, vermiculture and sheep rearing to encourage their farming activities and create income sources. As a drought prone area Aundipatti block served best from VMI for women and farming communities.

VMI implemented UPNRM – NABARD project in 20 villages to encourage farmers in organic farming practices. Through this project VMI identified 170 direct beneficiaries from among Women farmers for various activities.



UPNRM Beneficiaries

Because of this program the income sources of the families increasing through Natural resource based interventions and they get regular income and employment sources through migration reduced considerable manner.

VMI is also initiated Farmers Clubs, Village Development Program and Skill Development Program with support and coordination of NABARD.

In addition to this VMI provide skill development training on tailoring for young women. The course of the training will be 12 months. This program supported by SANKALPA, USA.



VMI Director explain the purpose of the training



Mrs. Usha devi – Project officer, Women Development Corporation advice to Important of the training

Every year 90 young women and widows were completed tailoring training. After completion of this training many of them were provided opportunity to work garment companies & shops and promoted self-employment through financial support of women SHGs.

As a drought prone district large number of young men and women leaving from agriculture and migrate to seek employment opportunities in cities and other states. To reduce this situation VMI organized district level program on “Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture-ARYA” with the support, cooperation and coordination of M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai.



Dr. Parasuraman, MSSRF explaining about the country's self reliance in Agriculture



Mrs. Prema Best Agri farmers Awardee sharing her experiences on IYFF meeting.

As a result of this youths were motivated to work and continue in agriculture. The same manner programs were organized for women farmers in the district. In this program 90 Women Youths were participated and benefitted. “International Year of Family Farming” –IYFF programs were organized in district level through the guidelines of MSSRF, Chennai.

Situation of Tribal Communities in Theni District:

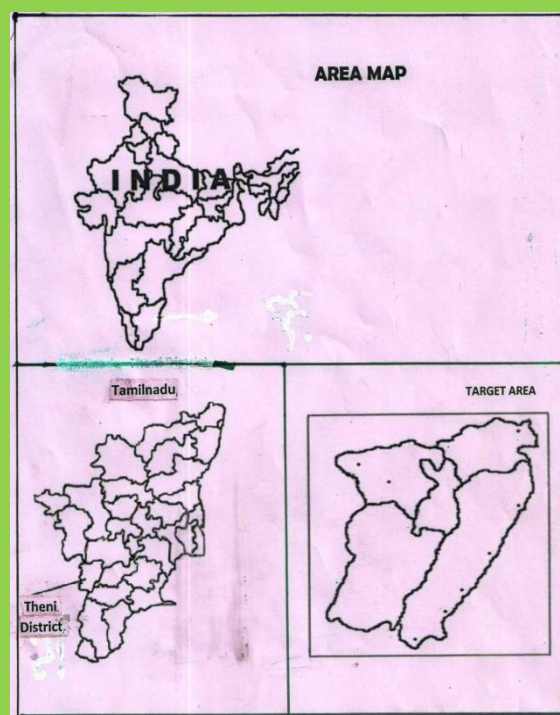
Theni district is located in Western Ghats area of Tamilnadu. Theni District lies at the foot of Western Ghats and is situated between $90^{\circ} 53'$ and $10^{\circ} 22'$ north latitude and $77^{\circ} 17'$ and $77^{\circ} 67'$ east longitude. The general geographical information of the district is diversified by several ranges and hills. The vegetation is classified as southern tropical forests in the plains and foot hills, dry deciduous forests, moist deciduous forests and evergreen forests in the high altitudes. The Western part of district consists of hill stations of Agamalai, Kurangani, which has many Tribal Settlements. There are about 18 settlements. Mudhuvar and Paliar is major tribal communities are living in all settlements. The tribal settlement does not have any basic amenities and facilities. They depend on agriculture but they gain very meager income from their lands. There are few residential schools but do not

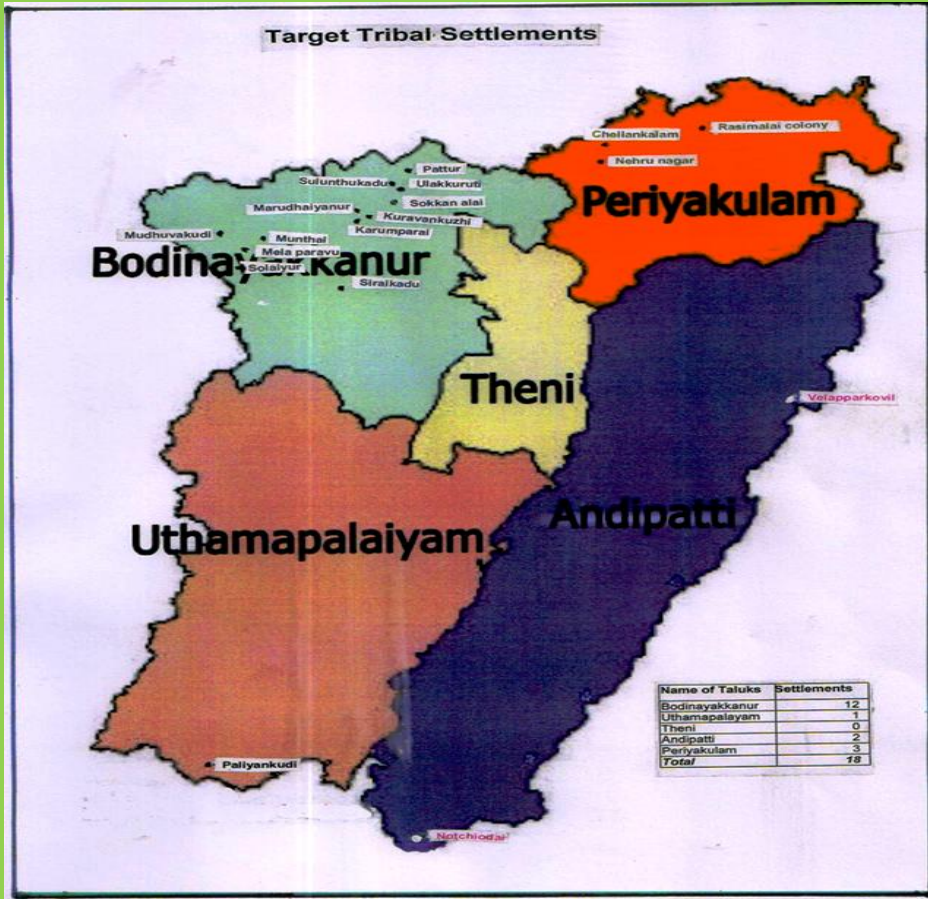
have teachers. To do any shopping for families they have walk for Bodinayakkanoor and Periyakulam around 15-20kms. In some villages they use horse to transport products. These remote villages located about 3000-4000 Msl and do not have electricity. For any medical emergencies they use “cloth cradle” to transport the patients. The women do not get any health facilities such as pre-natal and post-natal care. Traditional methods adopted in delivery of women. Children and women were affected by many diseases. Men involve in agriculture and off season they seek employment sources in cities and other forest areas where they face lots of difficulties. They do utilized for illegal occupations. In absence of men many families suffer from illness and force of forest and police officials.

Informal Visit to Tribal Villages:

In this situation VMI made effort to make some initiatives for the welfare and development of tribes in above villages particularly in the field of agriculture, women welfare and development. VMI is planning to use its earlier experience for the purpose. Hence it was decided to make an informal visit to 18 villages belongs to Bodinaycakanoor, Andipatti and Uthamapalyam areas.

| Target beneficiaries and proposed location | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| S.No | Name of the Village | Total Families | Male | Female | Total |
| 1 | Siraikkadu | 60 | 95 | 85 | 180 |
| 2 | Solaiyur | 70 | 130 | 118 | 248 |
| 3 | Melapparavu | 48 | 80 | 70 | 150 |
| 4 | Mundhal | 45 | 105 | 87 | 192 |
| 5 | Mudhuvakkudi | 47 | 79 | 75 | 154 |
| 6 | Sokkan alai | 40 | 105 | 90 | 195 |
| 7 | Pattur | 10 | 28 | 20 | 48 |
| 8 | Marudhaiyanur | 21 | 30 | 25 | 55 |
| 9 | Kuravankuzhi | 17 | 55 | 42 | 97 |
| 10 | Karumbarai | 22 | 45 | 39 | 84 |
| 11 | Sulunthukadu | 12 | 27 | 25 | 52 |
| 12 | Nehru nagar | 36 | 89 | 83 | 172 |
| 13 | Chellankalam | 30 | 92 | 82 | 174 |
| 14 | Rasimalai colony | 35 | 105 | 99 | 204 |
| 15 | Karattuppatty | 16 | 45 | 39 | 84 |
| 16 | Velapparkoil | 15 | 32 | 29 | 61 |
| 17 | Notchiodai | 32 | 73 | 61 | 134 |
| 18 | Paliyankudi | 60 | 124 | 115 | 239 |
| | Total | 616 | 1339 | 1184 | 2523 |





Prior to this, VMI Team decided to make a visit to **Beermedu Development Society-BDS** a NGO working for Tribal Communities in Beermedu which is a reputed organization nearest to the proposed Tribal areas and we learn their best approaches and methods to replicate same in proposed villages.



NABARD DDM Mrs. Deepa Pillai explains the initiatives of the tribal development project.



Mr. Sipi Joseph Coordinator BDS explain the programs of BDS.



VMI Staff visiting and interaction on Venila cultivation

With all above arrangements senior staffs had visited the under mentioned all villages through local transport systems. The VMI Team was headed by Mr. Chinnandi, Director of VMI. Every village VMI Team met traditional leaders, women, aged people, youth and children.



Interaction with Traditional Tribal leaders and aged people



Discussion and interaction with tribal women.



Discussion and interaction with Tribal Youths.

They had narrated their situation and pathetic living conditions and requested to make suitable interventions for the development of people living there. VMI Team visited the villages do not have any transport and communication access. Based on the visit VMI Board decided to conduct a Needs Assessment Survey in above villages. Thus a survey format was designed and staffs were provided necessary training over the format and enhance the survey in best way. All the staff was requested to do structural and unstructured interview methods. Based on this training Senior Team from VMI met the tribal leaders and fixed dates and time for Needs Assessment Survey in all villages. As per the plan VMI Team conducted Needs Assessment Survey in the month of July 2014 in which 12 staffs were involved under the leadership and consultation of Ms.Seethalakshmi, Treasurer-VMI, Mr.Chinnandi, Director and Project Consultant Mr.Maheswaran.

The Needs Assessment Survey had done family wise to assess the information. Before initiate the interview; the purpose of survey was explained to the respondent and obtain their consent.



Recap on Survey Format with Staff.



Interaction with respondent on survey format.



Survey with various tribal villages



Large number of survey forms completed with the support and cooperation of family head and other members. The senior staff had provided necessary guidelines and support in the field. Totally VMI completed 616 formats from 18 hamlets. In all villages there are 1339 men and 1184 women. Because of this visit and survey they become committed to work for tribes and become concern about the situation of tribes.

Outcome of the Needs Assessment:

- ☞ The tribal settlements located in remote places which do not have any modern amenities and facilities.
- ☞ All villages do not have basic transport and communication facilities.
- ☞ There are no schooling and education facilities for children which caused for the existence of child labor.
- ☞ The existing Residential Schools also do not have necessary teachers.
- ☞ Men, Women and Children are deprived from health care facilities.
- ☞ Many villages do not have electricity facilities and available Solar Systems were also damaged long back.
- ☞ Promotion of agriculture and cash crops is their primary livelihood.
- ☞ The promoted crops were affected by forest animals which affected their livelihood and income sources.
- ☞ There are no appropriate water facilities for agriculture and protected drinking water for families.
- ☞ Parthenium Hysterophorus is wide spread in the villages particularly in homestead, agricultural land and worship places which is big threat to cultivation and health of communities.
- ☞ Forest animals destroyed their agricultural cultivations at the time of harvest season which affects their economy.
- ☞ Coffee, pepper, cardamom, orange, lemon, chitharathai, jack fruit, silk cotton, tapioca, betel nut and medicinal plants were the common agricultural products.
- ☞ All villages are facing preservation and marketing of all agricultural products.
- ☞ The tribal communities are not aware of land development methods and there is no support to involve such interventions in the land.
- ☞ They are very much in need of fencing for their lands to save their cultivation from forest animals.
- ☞ They were in need of education and training to develop their land based activities.

Interaction and Presentation of Survey Outcome with People:

After completion of Needs Assessment Survey VMI presented and discussed the survey outcomes with the people in common places of the villages. In these presentation traditional leaders, women and youths were participated. They agree with the outcomes and add additional points how to improve the situation in better way. With reference to this they developed Resource Mapping of the village which shows the location of water sources that could be used for agriculture and other livelihood process. There are enough human and land based resources to improve the situation. But they are in need of investment and protection process of their agro-based products. Because poor income sources from agriculture they were forced to go for far places to seek employment in dangerous, hazardous and illegal occupations and met with problems. The government is also not providing much care over their community development process. With this interaction and background VMI presented some of the proposals before them and willing to identify resources which will be implement through their coordination, support and cooperation. VMI explain to them that the organizational capacity and willing to undertake these interventions through resources mobilized from outside. Then the under mentioned interventions was proposed as collaborative efforts of VMI and Communities.

Presentations/ Interactions with People over the Experience of Survey





Presentations/ Interactions with People over the Experience of Survey

- ✍ Water source for all families to involve agricultural activities in their own lands. Water and soil management interventions will be encouraged.
- ✍ Barbed wire fencing will integrate with life fencing process in the land to protect their agricultural products from forest animals.
- ✍ Ongoing Inland Fishing practices will be encouraged to improve their protein needs.
- ✍ Community Nurseries will be encouraged to promote needy saplings and seedlings for agriculture. This would reduce the transport cost and increase community cooperation as well as reduce weeds from plains and outside.
- ✍ Medicinal plantations will be encouraged to preserve and use of the same for commercial and community needs.
- ✍ Backyard Kitchen Garden, Bee-Keeping and Poultry will be encouraged for women.
- ✍ VMI will provide preservation and marketing tie-ups for all their agricultural products which could be implementing through the 'Tribal Committee' cooperation.
- ✍ The existing organic farming practices will be encouraged and sustain the same in all villages through community cooperation.
- ✍ Ensure protected drinking water for all families and preventive health care will be focused.

- ✍ Reproductive Health Care programs will be organized for women and men to enhance healthy life.
- ✍ Periodical 'health camps' will be organized to improve their health status. Through these camps simple and common ailments will be treated. Chronic and acute patients will be referred to appropriate hospitals for further investigation and management.
- ✍ Women Self-Help Groups will be promoted in all villages and it will be strengthened route through all interventions.
- ✍ "Barefoot Health Care Supporters" will be encouraged in all villages to provide health care support for human, animal and all agricultural operations.
- ✍ Schooling and education will be encouraged for children.
- ✍ Value added interventions will be organized to encourage the ongoing activities and extending support community living.

VMI TEAM VISIT WATER SOURCES IN THE VILLAGES



Resource mapping on Water sources

Epilogue:

Vaigai Magalir Iyakkam-VMI learnt a lot about the tribal community situation which is not known to people living in the plains. The whole process provided an opportunity for VMI Staff to be with tribes who were suffering from all problems. The needs of people became very much understood and efforts were made to support the cause of tribes in the above villages. It is also a challenge to VMI to mobilize resources and do the best for tribes through their cooperation and support. VMI is taking this opportunity to thank all staff, communities and individuals involved in the Needs Assessment Survey process.





Available transportation facility through horse



Available grinding facility which tribes use



House wall made by banana fibers.



Fishing instrument called katcha.



Model fish pond located in tribal village.



Integrated barbed wire and life fencing which is safe for animal and protection for agricultural cultivation.