

Crime Free Society

an experiment in participatory & sustainable development

*Report on CRIME-FREE SOCIETY project in Division XII of Thrissur Corporation,
carried out by JANANEETHI with support of
the FEDERAL GRANT by the AMERICAN CENTRE, New Delhi*



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Mr. Justice K.A.Abdul Gafoor, Kerala High Court inaugurates the project works in Mullakkara village. On the dias from left is Mrs.Santha Vasudevan (*chairperson of people's council*), Dr.K.N.Panikkar (*Vice Chancellor of Sree Sankara Sanskrit University*) and Mr.James Murickan (*the Principal District & Sessions Judge*)

aware that there is only little truth in what has been profusely advertised as "God's own Country".

The people of Kerala State, despite their advancement in education and health care, are far ahead in the case of crimes, in custodial torture and deaths, in road accidents and consequential culpable homicides, in the case of escalating number of suicides, in the ever increasing instances of sexual atrocities and

Introduction

Kerala Model Development – has been a myth, much acclaimed and widely discussed for quite some time, nationally and internationally. The only possible justification for romanticizing such a claim may be the impressions created in the West by the scenic beauty, natural resources, literacy and public health in the State of Kerala. However, the Keralites are well

Post graduate students of St.Aloysius college getting prepared to start the data collection in Division XII of Thrissur Corporation.



domestic violence, so on and so forth. It can not be taken as a compliment that 282 working days in a year had to witness more than 900 political demonstrations and road shows sprawling utter chaos and calamities in Thiruvananthapuram city alone.

The importance of an experiment on a 'Crime-free Society', envisaged by Jananeethi, finds its relevance and



The people of Division XII under the leadership of Mrs.Santha Vasudevan, the elected representative, takes interest in the project.

motivate the local people to participate in building a better community environment devoid of communal, caste or class divide, political aggression or religious discrimination. As we look back to the period we spent with the people, interacting and interpolating with them, Jananeethi has many reasons to be proud of.

Project Realization

1.The people of Mullakkara village (Division XII) appeared to be very suspicious and apprehensive as we approached them at the beginning of our



Advocate Ms Sini Saji of Jananeethi explains what it means a 'crime-free zone'

significance in this context. Fearlessness is the cultural basis of any sustainable development. It is fearlessness that enables one to dream that another fairer and just world is possible, to endeavour for its manifestation, and to adequately and appropriately respond to the critiques of the newer and fairer world.

The ultimate aim of Jananeethi in initiating the project on Crime-free society in Division XII of Thrissur corporation was to organize and

Advocate Faritha Ansari of Jananeethi and other law officers listen to petitioners and villagers





Advocate Seby J. Pully explains to the villagers basic principles in law

work in the village. They apparently were reluctant to receive us in their homes. They refused to talk to us. They even challenged our integrity and *bonafides* alleging unfounded hidden motives. Few of them even threatened our field staff. However, in a short span of time, these sections of people were turned to be our best friends, colleagues and promoters of Jananeethi in the village. We never, ever had any unpleasant experience though there were hard times and strained relations as part of our hazardous work.

2. Jananeethi conducted two social surveys in the designated area and found that there were around 1600 families in the area. These families were grouped into 84 neighbourhood communities, each of which contained 18 to 20 families. Those communities were again classified into 5 zones and each zone was assigned to one of the project staff of Jananeethi. Thus Jananeethi could penetrate into the society, more

specially into the segment of illiterate and unorganized housewives who never had any involvement in society at all. Such women started to attend the activities of Jananeethi in large number and the change brought in has been very obvious.

3. The people in Division XII under the leadership of the elected representative to the Corporation Council,

Mrs. Santha Vasudevan, came forward to co-operate in the activities of Jananeethi and they did get involved in the need assessment study conducted in the area by Jananeethi with the help of the Post Graduate Department of Economics, St. Aloysius College, Elthuruth.

4. Jananeethi initiated legal literacy classes at very large scale at the aegis of the



Students of Law College are at work collecting petitions from the people.



One of the court rooms at the public adalat program



Chief Justice N.K.Sodhi inaugurates the public meeting on the 14th of Aug., 2004.

neighbourhood groups. From January to June of 2004, more than 500 legal literacy sessions were organized in the area. We believe more than one person from every family have attended one or more sessions during this period. The elementary subjects in law like the Constitutional rights and duties, essentials in civil and criminal laws, traffic rules, consumer laws, labour legislations, rules relating to civil liabilities, laws related to marriage, maintenance, property rights etc were dealt with in sufficient details. Charts were prepared on various provisions of law and were distributed free of costs among people for exhibiting in

their homes and at public places. Apart from the legal faculty of Jananeethi, lawyers of good standing in the district and sessions courts in Thrissur, retired judges, teachers and students of the Law College, Thrissur and friends of Jananeethi at various institutions collaborated in this attempt.

5. A second and more specific survey format was used to collect information from the people regarding pending civil disputes in courts. Details of disputes and quarrels existed in families, among neighbours, between individual families and groups of people were also collected and

A galaxy of distinguished personalities: From L to R – Mrs.Santha Vasudevan (Councilor), Mr.Joseph Thekkekuruvinal (Dist.Judge), Mr.Sarat Chandran (Dist.Judge), Mr.Joseph Francis(Pricipal Dist.&Sessions Judge), Mr.Justice R.Bhaskaran(High Court) Mr.Justice N.K.Sodhi (CJ, Kerala High Court), Mr.K.A.Abdul Gafoor, (High Court), Mr.K.Radhakrishnan (Mayor), Dr.K.V.Peter (Vice Chancellor, KAU), Mr.P.Rajan (Deputy Collector) and Prof.K.G.Sankara Pillai (Chairman, Jananeethi)





Health is humanright: Prof. N.N.Gokuldas talks to the people.

tabulated as per the requirements of the District Legal Services Authority. This was conducted by the help of 20 animators who were selected from 5 zones after group dynamics and focused group discussions. These animators were given thorough training in leadership, skill development, communication, documentation, and performance appraisal. They went around their designated areas and interacted with the people and got the survey forms properly filled. Thus there were 1146 disputes / petitions including those that were pending before civil courts. These petitions were classified, tabulated,

critically gauged and documented based on merits and were taken to the District Legal Services Authority for its official approval of the procedural compliances.

6. Hon o u r a b l e
Mr.Justice K.A.Abdul



Volunteers donate blood as part of Jananeethi campaign for voluntary donation of blood.

The corporation Mayor hands over the documents offering eyes after death to Dr.Alex Joseph, head of department of Ophthalmology, Jubilee Medical college.



Gafoor, the executive chairman of the State Legal Services Authority, Shri.U.Sarat Chandran, District Judge & Member Secretary of SLSA, Shri. M.L.Joseph Francis, the Principal District and Sessions Judge & Chairman, District Legal Services Authority and Shri Joseph Thekkekuruvinal, the District Judge and



Dr.A.K.K.Unni (Director, AIMS, Cochin) distributing contact lenses to poor patients

the District Superintendent of Police, the district and sessions judges, the subordinate judges of the various courts in Thrissur district, Prof. K.G.Sankara Pillai, the Chairman of Jananeethi, and a galaxy of distinguished guests, friends and well wishers of Jananeethi and a large crowd of people declared the Division XII of Thrissur Corporation LEGALLY LITERATE & LITIGATION FREE.

Secretary, District Legal Services Authority were always available and helpful of extending their best of advices and guidances as and when required. Every settlement arrived at in the process was as good as a final decree by a court of law. And more importantly there was no appeal on such disposal of disputes.

7. On 14th August 2004, the Chief Justice of Kerala High Court, Mr.Justice N.K.Sodhi in the presence of his brother judges of the High Court, Mr.Justice K.A.Abdul Gafoor and Mr. Justice R.Baskaran, and other dignitaries like Mr.K.Radhakrishnan, the worshipful Mayor of Thrissur Corporation, Dr.K.V.Peter, the Vice Chancellor of Kerala Agricultural University, the Asst. Collector,

8. The next stage of public awareness was directed to the Community Health Programmes. Around one hundred awareness classes were organized with the help of doctors, medical practitioners, health professionals, health assistants and health activists with special focus on women's health problems and domestic hygiene. Jananeethi staff and the field animators took efforts that maximum participation was assured from the villagers in this effort.
9. As part of the ongoing health literacy programmes, a medical camp was organized with the help of the Department of Ophthalmology of Jubilee Mission Medical College, Thrissur for ophthalmic

Children away from drugs, pan parag and all tobacco products – a session by Fr. Davis Chakkalalal in progress



An appraisal and re-training for the animators and volunteers





Kuttikkootam: For a world without hate or violence.
Manu Jose interacting with students.

diseases. Senior doctors of the Department, Dr.Alex Joseph, Dr.Moncy Thomas Maliekal and Dr Andrews Kakknatt together with a full team of nurses and para-medicals conducted the camp. A campaign for eye donation was also organized along with and few hundred people signed papers offering their eyes after death. Contact glasses were distributed at free of costs to sixty people who were prescribed to wear contact lense.

10. In collaboration with the Indian Medical Association (Thrissur Branch), a blood group detection camp was organized at the Jananeethi campus for the inhabitants of Division XII of the Thrissur Corporation. Large number of villagers responded to the call. Blood was donated by 45 people

on the same day. The doctors and health activists appraised to the public the merits and advantages of donating blood and the profound humanitarian message implied there in.

11. Jananeethi project staff with the aid and assistance of the community health workers and health activists organized several workshops, seminars and camps in schools and educational institutions against the rampant usage of alcohol, drugs, tobacco products, and other narcotic products. The students were exhorted to declare war against the use such dangerous substances. There was wide receptivity among student community and the teaching staff for these programmes.
12. The Division XII (Mullakkara Village) was declared HEALTH LITERATE by Dr.A.K.K.Unni, Director of Research, Amruta Institute of Medial Sciences, Kochi at a special meeting held on the 10th of December 2004 to mark the International Human Rights day. The function was also attended by Dr.K.V.Mohanan, the District Medical Officer, Thrissur and Dr.C.N.Parameswaran, Director of Ashwini Hospital and Indian Medical Association. This is the first ever village in





Yuvajagratha engaged in filling the pits on the highway

Kerala State, perhaps in India, to be declared health-literate.

13. The future of India is bleak in consideration of the ever widening gulf between the different religious communities. It has been our conviction from experience that all main stream religions are becoming communal in practice. Even children are groomed and trained by 'die-hard' people. To counter this dangerous trend, Jananeethi had resolved to initiate various programmes for children of the project area. Intense activities were organized during summer holidays in 2004 at different centres for facilitating maximum number of students to attend. Thereafter, 125 students were chosen from all five zones and regular week-end training programmes were conducted for them at Jananeethi campus. These students belonged to all castes and religions. They belonged to the age of 10 to 14 including boys and girls. They learned many skills in performing arts and jointly did stage performances on several occasions. The

aim of Jananeethi is to build up cultural pluralism where every one respects unity in diversity.

14. There are many talented teenage girls and young ladies in the project area who are remaining idle at home. Jananeethi with the help of Chetana Film Academy organized training course for them in photography. The purpose of the training sessions was to equip them with know-how and skill to handle camera and to give articulation to their feelings and life experiences. The out come of the course was spectacular. Good many of them produced short films depicting rustic rural life opening to a world of strange realities.

15. Youth is a tremendous force for good or bad. Jananeethi realized it in Division XII where many young men are influenced by wild passions. Youth and crimes are intrinsically related. The unemployed youth, who are otherwise frustrated and



A fairer society is possible: young men and women at a workshop



Women attending a seminar on Women and Health.

agitated, are easily drawn to gang activities involving themselves in criminal and antisocial activities. Hence Jananeethi launched a movement for the youth under the banner of YUVAJAGRATHA (means youth on vigil) for creative involvement in the society. They take up common cause i.e. maintaining public places (space), cleaning public streets, attending primary needs in Primary Health Centres, attending terminally ill people, initiating programmes for communal amity and co-operation etc. Yuvajagratha units have been started at different centres so that more young people are incorporated into its activities.

16. There are umpteen numbers of teenage girls and young ladies who have discontinued their education but doing nothing, in the project area. They are confined to the four walls of their houses. Jananeethi has initiated various programmes to activate those young women. They are organized into small groups locally and are given training in leadership skills, group activities, role plays, and stage performances. They are also introduced to various vocational trainings like weaving, handicrafts, catering etc. Health based discourses like sex education, hygiene, reproductory

health, communicable diseases, family budgeting etc are also been organized for the improvement of the group.

17. Jananeethi has conducted extensive survey in the village to find out whether there is employment of children in labour. Also we wanted to ascertain that no child has been taken away from the village for child labour. Accordingly Jananeethi was convinced that there has not been instances of child labour in the area. Only three pupils were identified as school drop outs. Arrangements are being made to give them special tuition to enable them write SSLC examination. The population of the area are by and large very poor so that they are not able to give their children proper tuition for compete with their counter-parts from rich families. Hence Jananeethi has resolved to offer free tuition in science, mathematics and English to children who are not able to afford tuition fees.

18. Unemployment and abject poverty are basic reasons for many people getting involved in criminal activities. Many

Mrs K.K.Radhamoni of Jananeethi speaks to women of the village on hygiene





Women's role in community health – women at seminar

women of all ages dare to sell their bodies only to have both ends meet. Famine and hunger also invite innumerable miseries and calamities in families provoking husbands and wives fight and blame on each other. Families are broken, conjugal relationships are shattered, and harmony and tranquility in society get disturbed due to all these reasons. The only way to save the people is help them to help themselves in earning their livelihood. Hence Jananeethi conducted a month-long intense training programme in self employment which was attended 30 young women and men. They were given clear notion about marketing the goods they'd produce. Efforts are being made

Children's day celebration



to form their co-operatives for the purpose of marketing.

19. Jananeethi has launched massive campaign against domestic violence and sexual atrocities in the village. Our aim was to eradicate wife-beating and gender discrimination and torture from the community for ever. Women should enjoy full freedom and dignity in families and in society as safe as their male counterparts. We are aware that we have to go a long way. Yet obvious changes have been manifested due to our consistent efforts through neighbourhood groups.

20. 'Crime-free society' is an ideal situation that may be materialized only through the active and joint efforts of the people of the area. This legacy has to be taken over by the people to make it sustainable. Jananeethi can only be a catalytic agent for some time. Hence a people's council was formed with representatives from all walks of life. There are 101 members in the council. All major decisions are taken only after consultation with the members of the council. Care has been given to ensure adequate representation by all sections and categories of people in the council. There are various sub-committees under the council to look into efficient functioning of the project.

21. Interactions and deliberations in the community on current issues and matters of common interests will be organized in the Jananeethi campus at regular



Legacy to the hands of the people: A session of the People's council.

intervals. An open stage and public address system has been set up in the premises of Jananeethi Institute for the purpose. Jananeethi aims at monthly programmes that promote cultural pluralism and peaceful co-existence among people of diverse faith and practices.

22. Four cottages have been set up in the Jananeethi campus for the use of the villagers for meaningful interaction among themselves. These cottages will also facilitate exchanges between voluntary organizations and people's movements who work for social welfare and good governance. Workshops and Focused Group Discussions will be organized at these cottages as part of on-going training and discourses for the aims of the crime-free society.
23. Jananeethi is well aware of the importance of building up of a strong 'counter force' by secular collective in order to address the escalating issues of communal and criminal tendencies in contemporary society. We would seek the collaboration and co-operation of all

institutions and individuals to unite under the banner of cultural pluralism. We want people to shun violence and hatred, and to work for the promotion of an inter-dependent and inter-active social milieu through communication and participation.

24. The Concept of 'crime-free society' was the fabulous and most coveted expression of a symbiotic relationship in an ideal society. In every human being and in every community, there is a deep rooted love for a dignified life, free from fear and corruption. It may be a never ending journey, but Jananeethi is committed to its realization through people's participation. Though we can not claim a complete success in this endeavour, we have a reason for gratification for the modest changes and improvements we could bring in.

25. Jananeethi campus and its myriad activities will remain a symbol of people's aspirations and joint efforts for a violent-free, corruption-free, litigation-free, dowry-free, torture-free, hunger-free and

The villagers and Jananeethi staff cleaning the drainage



fear-free society holding the dignity and freedom of every individual notwithstanding his / her caste, colour, racial, religious, linguistic or ideological differences.

Conclusion

This project for a 'Crime-free Society' was sponsored by the AMERICAN CENTRE, New Delhi through their FEDERAL GRANT SCHEME. The project period was expired on the 30th of September, but the execution period was permitted to be extended to the end of December 2004. Therefore, the project activities were formally wound up on the 31st of December, 2004. However, the activities that had been launched during the project period will be continued, though at a low key, by the field staff of Jananeethi and with the support and voluntary help of the villagers. Jananeethi has given this assurance to the people of the Mullakkara village. We'll continue our support to the people and will carry on the message without fail.

JANANEETHI places on record its profound gratitude to the AMERICAN CENTRE, New Delhi and its noble functionaries for the FEDERAL GRANT they provided for the implementation of the project. But for their timely help and support, Jananeethi would not have dared to initiate this project. We also remain deeply obliged to those institutions and organizations that assisted / associated with us in the execution of the project. The District Administration of Thrissur Revenue District, the Thrissur Corporation, the Kerala Agricultural University, the District Legal Services Authority, Government Law College, St.Aloysious College, Vimala College, Indian Medical Association, Jubilee Mission Medical College, the Thrissur Bar Association and the friends and benefactors of Jananeethi are among those who collaborated with Jananeethi at different stages and at various lengths. We owe them much, indeed.

For Jananeethi

George Pulikuthiyil
Executive Director, JANANEETHI.