

Strategic review

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THE FLOWERING OF BLOSSOM

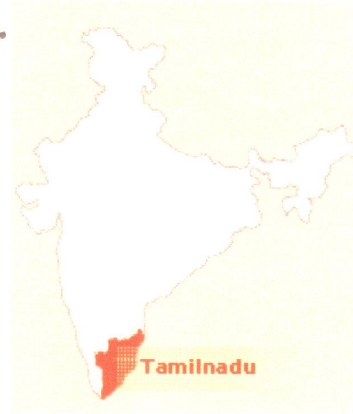


**Blossom Trust's Philanthropic Services
from 1993 to 2008**

BLOSSOM TRUST

Its Identity:

Blossom is a no-profit organization, founded by Fr. Benjamin Vima in 1993. It is located in Tamilnadu, South India. It is run by a Board of lay directors, mostly women.



Its Vision:

"Blossoming Power in Every Individual" to reinforce community development.

Its Mission:

To facilitate a process where marginalized groups, particularly women and children, have improved quality of life, by working in partnership with other development actors with a rights perspective in the areas of Art, Culture and Human Development.

Its Goal:

To contribute towards development of communities through a process of empowerment of women and children resulting in their holistic development.

Its Objectives:

- ❖ To make certain community frameworks are developed, ensuring women and children's issues are properly addressed
- ❖ To ensure communities have greater access and control over resource and equally distributed
- ❖ To facilitate a process, wherein community capacity and resources are mutually exchanged and the indigenous knowledge base are shared to be preserved and built in.
- ❖ To develop Blossom as a people based organization

Its Strategies:

- ❖ Identifying and working with appropriate resource institution.
- ❖ Enhancing credibility through appropriate Partnerships and involvement.
- ❖ Developing Reviewing and strengthening the documentation process and strategies.
- ❖ Animating People's participation in attaining their development.

Its Values:

- ❖ Being transparent and accountable.
- ❖ Respecting and promoting individual dignity with care and nurturing it.

BLOSSOM'S PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES FROM 1993 TO 2008

A. Service toward Women Development

A.1. Formation and Management of POOMALAI, a Cluster of Women Self help Groups:



"To develop a society, start it from the first powerful step, the women" Women are considered as "The Power of God" from the first day on the earth but her power was hidden in the recent days which affect the balance and proper functioning of society. To bring out the potential of women's inner strength to the outside world, Blossom has initiated its development activities since 1993 and proceeds positively.

In partnership with Tamilnadu Women Development Corporation has been carrying out the scheme of "Mahalir Thittam" from 1998 onwards BLOSSOM organizes Self Help Groups (SHGs) of women in and around Virudhunagar and Sivakasi Blocks, Tamilnadu, India. BLOSSOM's persistent efforts have borne to bear fruits. The women groups have grown to a level with substantial savings from within and linkages made with external institutions. With the federation of all women Self Help Groups into one umbrella known as POOMALAI, the federation remains the managerial and the catalytic force in enabling the progress of the women development. The long felt need of a community banking is being resolved with the formation of "POOCHARAM" –the unit under POOMALAI and a division that exclusively governs the financial aspects of POOMALAI. Mobilization of resources, share capital mobilization, credit revolvment and any other financial matters pertaining to the groups are dealt by the POOCHARAM division.

BLOSSOM with assistance from Friends of World Women Banking (FWWB), Ahmedabad had arranged loan assistance to the financial division of the women federation called POOMALAI. The amount was distributed to active and progressive Self Help Group Women to further enhance their Self Help Group enterprise activities.

Poomalai's Progress in 15 years:

Total number of Panchayats covered: 53
Number of Panchayats covered during the year: 3
Total number of SHGs formed: 417 groups
Number of Self Help Groups during the year: 81
Total number of Panchayat and Ward Level Federation: 55
Number of groups provided with credit linkage 83

Credit Linkage details:

Total savings of the groups	Rs.7615000
Total groups fund	Rs.9237000
Total savings for the year	Rs.2828000
Total group fund for the year	Rs.3306000
Internal Loan from SHGs	Rs.9955000
Under SGSY economic activity	Rs. 200000

A.2. Training of Women in Organizational and Entrepreneurship Skills:

BLOSSOM has anchored several training programs for the Self Help Group members which have built their capacities in many dimensions. Some of the groups with their outstanding performances have been awarded with accolades and cash rewards by the District Administration. These Self Help Groups of women have further been federated at Panchayat levels (PLF) to represent their respective Panchayats for development. Propelling these groups through process initiatives of micro- finance for attaining self-reliance. BLOSSOM further imparted in them leadership, organizational, interpersonal and communication skills to bring them in collective solidarity for participatory development:

A.2.1. Training programs in Organizational Skills:

Animator and Representative Trainings: participated by 90 SHG Leaders
SHG Trainings: participated by 4310 Women Members
PLF Trainings: participated by 170 Members (from 28 Panchayats and Wards)

A.2.2 Training in Entrepreneurship Skills:

Associating with various Government Departments BLOSSOM provided trainings on Entrepreneurship Development on Micro-Enterprises (7 days each) to these women to attain self-reliance through income generating prospects. The following table provides information on the extent of EDP training provided to the women:

Conducted by	Beneficiaries
Mahalir Thittam	180
District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)	110
THADCO	50
DICC	55

A.2.3. SGSY Training:

As part of SGSY scheme of the Government District Rural Development Agency had provided basic training on Entrepreneurship to 4 Self Help Groups on market survey, product identification, market acceptance, production, pricing, marketing, quality control, accounts maintenance, book keeping etc.

A.2.4. Vocational Training Programs: (VTP)



BLOSSOM had conducted special vocational training to women members in different trades to pave way for the promotion of self employment opportunities for these women. Trainings in various trades and crafts:

Trade	Duration	Beneficiaries
Tailoring:	3 months	30
Handicrafts:	7 days	5
Candle making:	7 days	2
Fur toy making:	7 days	2
Food processing:	7 days	21
Cell-phone Repairing:	21 days	6
Paper cup/plates/bags making:	21 days	11

A.2.5. Other meetings for Women Development:

BLOSSOM had also conducted Block Level Committee meetings of SHG leaders to impart in them knowledge on skill sets development and to reinforce them on human development. During the year under reporting BLOSSOM had conducted 72 such meetings in both the blocks of Virudhunagar and Sivakasi.

A.2.6 Income Generating Programs:



BLOSSOM has also initiated the women members into income generating prospects by providing them with suitable avenues for income generation. This is being done with the help of local administrative agencies and also by pooling the saving resources of Self Help Groups. Prominent activities in women IGP include petty shops, retail outlets, textile and handloom shops match and fireworks sub units, vessels and chairs lending even plying mini buses to rural routes. These activities have made them capable of certain income that has led them to an economic upliftment in the lives these rural womenfolk.

A.2.7. Workshop on Market Support System to SHG Products:

Not remaining content with the EDP training, BLOSSOM further wished and resolved to reinstate the Women from Self Help Groups with EDP training to progress with awareness and knowledge on marketing. BLOSSOM thus organized a three day workshop on "Marketing Support to Self Help Group's products" on the 19th, 20th, 21st of December 2002 under the able support of Tamilnadu Women Development Corporation, Virudhunagar. The Workshop inaugurated by the District Collector had the participation of Institutional representatives, Banking personnel and resource persons in the field of marketing besides the SHG Women entrepreneurs. Reinforcing on the purpose of the workshop to provide marketing support to the SHG made products, the resource persons delved in detail to impart knowledge of marketing and its support to the SHG women assembled. Elaborately describing the market support system, marketing and its importance, present status of marketing strategy of SHGs, Identification of the business opportunities and selection of activities, facilitation process of linkages of SHGs with buyers of SHG products, market information, technology transfer, skills and developing entrepreneurship, markets potentiality of the products and market feed back, the resource persons put in awareness and knowledge to SHG women on their existing market support system and the need to develop such a system. The workshop enduring for 3 days had witnessed overwhelming participation of SHG Women members and leaders with more than 250 women participating in the program. The program was made lively by incorporating demonstration of products manufacturing by as sandal soap making were introduced.

Women in successful Entrepreneurship

The District Collector and the district administration in noticing the outstanding solidarity and community action by certain of the Self Help Groups formed and organized by BLOSSOM that they had allocated 3 shop floor spaces for these women groups in the newly built District Marketing Complex. Six of such outstanding groups are engaged in the manufacture of candles, agarbattis, ready-made garments, paper cups, and bags, and standing items in this complex on a profitable mode. The Collectorate in noticing the performance of another group has allocated them a space in the Collectorate Complex where the group is running a STD Booth, Xeroxing and Retailing on stationery, pickles and pappads successfully and profitably.

Tangible Results in Women Empowerment through Blossom:

The development initiatives implemented for rural women empowerment by BLOSSOM have begun to reflect enormously in the promotion of community welfare and rural development through enhanced solidarity among women and their collective participation towards development as demonstrated hereunder:

- ❖ Promotion of public hygiene by waste collection and street cleaning by Self Help Group Women.
- ❖ Participation in the promotion of national integration through celebration of both Independence Day and Republic Day events.
- ❖ By participating to conduct free eye camps in their respective villages for the benefit of entire community.
- ❖ Community tree plantation program by Self Help Groups.
- ❖ Collective Organization and participation in a workshop to disseminate women role in society.
- ❖ One group in Sivakasi went on further to distribute cooking vessels to those of the stranded in a fire accident.
- ❖ The same group besides contributing to waste bins for the community usage, also conducted a campaign to abolish plastic usage.
- ❖ Demonstrated community participation in social mobilization to care and support for the HIV/AIDS infected among the society members.
- ❖ Demonstrated financial help to the needy of those whose houses were in dilapidated conditions
- ❖ Self Help Groups participation and contribution of a weighing machine and clothes for those of the HIV/AIDS affected.
- ❖ Self Help Groups conducted general health camps for the community members.
- ❖ Demonstrated participation in seeking welfare measures such as drinking water, hand pumps, overhead tanks, and sanitation facilities to the rural communities.
- ❖ The most significant and important reflection of women organization and training for empowerment is demonstrated by the action of more than 100 women from the Self Help Groups in different areas / villages to participate in Panchayat Raj elections. A number of them have been elected to represent their constituencies reflecting on the leadership qualities that these women have found to possess.
- ❖ Numerous other activities of Self Help Groups women collective participation such as drive against high our have only proved beyond doubt of their will and collective resolve to engage in total community welfare and development.

B. Service toward Children Development

B.1. ARUMBUHAL NURSARY Projects



Blossom Day care center at Sivaganapuram Village

B.1.1. Child Daycare Centers

BLOSSOM has established and been running a crèche for young children in the age group of 3 to 5 with the assistance of Central Social Welfare Board. During the year under reporting the strength of Creche remained at 25 with the boys strength at 13 and girls numbering 12. BLOSSOM arranges for monthly meetings of parents of the children on 10th of every month. Also celebrating the Children's Day program on every November 14th when fancy dress and other competitions are conducted to enlighten the Children, the students are also imparted education and the progress of students are evaluated through conducting monthly, Quarterly, Half yearly and yearly examination.

B.1.2. Non Formal Education Centers

Blossom runs 12 Non Formal Education Centers in and around Virudhunagar for child laborers and drop-outs.

B.1.3. Summer courses on vocational & skill development Programs

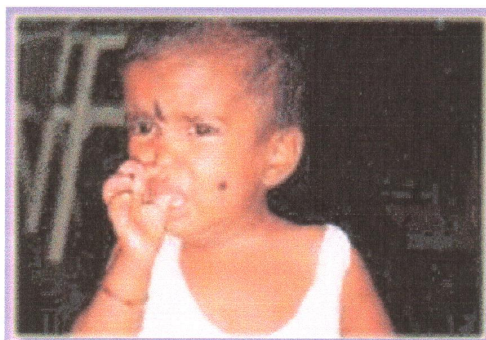


The happy turkeys in Blossom Poultry

In order to generated for the care and support of alienated children BLOSSOM has ventured into poultry farming and rearing nearly 200 ducklings of Turkey. The farm is situated at Chithoor, supported by Caritas Sweden. BLOSSOM also proposes to develop the farm into an Eco-Model for Bio-diversity promotion that is agro climatic friendly and adapt to local conditions. Also with the integration of Rain Water Harvesting, water conservation and management promotion, the farm in a short while will develop into a fully equipped training facility and a role model for the entire rural community to visit, acquire knowledge and develop them in their fields for greater rural environment development.

B.2. Service to AIDS -Infected and Affected-Children

B.2.1. Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission (Care for the Unborn)



A child affected by HIV/AIDS

Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission program is launched by Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society. The main aim of the program is "HIV free child from infected mother". During pregnancy period approximately 30% chance 1.0 passing the HIV virus to her new born baby. During labor and child birth 50% of HIV infection should transmitted the remaining 20% of infection shifted during breast feeding. PPTCT program should work above the three areas to prevent the Parent to Child Transmission.

B.2.2. Dayspring Home



DSH Children in school uniform

The District of Virudhunagar has been declared a high risk zone for AIDS endemic. With the alarming death rates rising, the children of the sufferers are left with no one to care for them or offer them food, a proper education or shelter. Some children are forced to work to support themselves from a young age. After their enormous loss they are subjected to discrimination by the community, such scars inhibit their growth within society. Blossom identified the need to offer such children a safe environment in which to live, thus in 2003 it opened the Dayspring Home. At this Home, 47 Children mostly affected by HIV/AIDS (CAA) receive food, shelter, medical help and the opportunity to have an education, as well as love and attention. This gives them better prospects for the future.

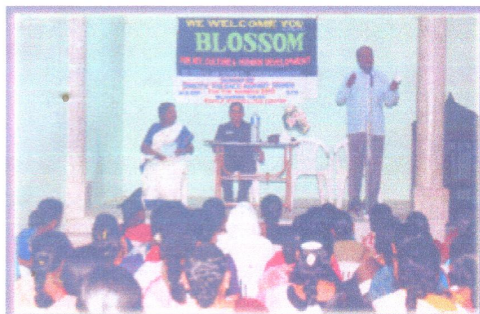


Dayspring Home

Most of the CAA's accommodated by the Dayspring Home, are orphaned. However, we also admit children from single-parent families, where the only opportunity for the mother is to work in the horrendous conditions of the matchstick and firework factories in the Sivakasi and Virudhunagar Districts. Under these circumstances there is often no one to care for the children during the day so they miss out on their education and their prospect would be to follow their mothers into the grim realities of factory work. The Orphanage is situated in our own building in the village of Chithur 11km outside Virudhunagar.

C. Service through Family Counseling Center

C.1. Counseling for Women:



Family Welfare remains one of major objectives of BLOSSOM. In order to promote family welfare for the rural lives that BLOSSOM has established a Family Counseling Centre in the year 1999. Not remaining with the task of providing counsel for the troubled minds, the centre also extends itself to provide suggestions, advices, remedies and in fact timely references to legal aids. The Centre also conducts awareness programs to sensitize community members on human rights, child rights, environment and legal aids.

Total number of cases attended so far by the Center - 388

Number of cases attended the reporting year - 120

Types of Problems

No. of Cases

Family / Material problems	18
Atrocities / violence on women	03
Physical problems	26
Assistance to Government Welfare Schemes (Old age pension, widow pension, etc.)	25
Health issues	05
Legal issues	11
Job counseling	13
Financial help	13
Social issues (Counseling for CSWs)	06

Of the total number of 120 cases attended during the year 2002-2003, 94 of the cases have been counseled and 26 of them are being continued on counseling. The Family Counseling Center run by BLOSSOM is ably supported for its actions by the District Collectorate, free legal service network and the Women Police Station. It has been looked after by two full time counselors to the need of the Center.

C.2. Gender Sensitization Program:



The District Police had formed a team of law enforcing officers to visit SHG Women in order to assess the state of awareness with the women on the functions of Police Department. Visiting in teams, the police officers had also gone about sensitizing the women on the various avenues by which the women could approach police for redressals, police in service of women, and confidence building measures for SHGs on the police units. The team had visited newly 10 villages and interviewed almost 75 SHGs.

3. Mobile Counseling:



A six member team comprising of BLOSSOM. All women police unit, social welfare officer and others had visited the SHG women in the villages of O.Kovilpatti, Thadangam and Vachakarapatti. The team went about providing the women with information, confidence, building measures, details on help line establishment and its functional details, protective mechanism for women, legal aids and police assistance for women, etc.

The Family Counseling Center (FCC), funded by the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), was established by Blossom Trust in 1999, with the aim of helping women and their families in and around the Virudhunagar District. It offers a free and confidential service by trained counselors.

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