

Organisational Strategy

2021 - 2024



Foreword

Since our last Organisational Strategy Report in 2020 we have achieved incredible successes, including our emergency COVID ration distribution and the rebranding and creation of our new Blossom Trust website.

However, the impact of COVID-19 on India and the rest of the world has been devastating. We have seen huge losses, disastrous impacts on the health structures of India and continued economic instability.



As a result of this disruption and uncertainty and the current lockdown in Tamil Nadu, it is with great sadness that Blossom Trust has had to reduce and limit some of our projects. In particular, our Creche project offering child support for working mothers has been temporarily stopped, as have our EduClowns.

For over 28 years, Blossom Trust has diligently responded to the needs of the communities in Tamil Nadu. At this current moment in time, with the implications and unexpected impacts of COVID-19, we have had to quickly adapt to the difficult circumstances faced by the community. Whilst this means temporarily pausing some projects, it also means we have been able to react and provide new and much needed responses. In particular, our two emergency COVID-19 projects distributed rations to households in Madurai and Chengalpattu. Furthermore, based on a community survey undertaken in 2020 we have now fully developed our agricultural project to respond to the needs for economic empowerment opportunities within the community as a result of COVID-19.

In light of this new environment and the limits and needs which we must adapt to, we have decided to renew our organisational strategy for 2021-2024. We hope to move forward over the next three years and continue to work together to provide for our communities of Tamil Nadu and beyond.

T. Mercy Annapoorani
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'T. Mercy Annapoorani'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

About Blossom Trust

Founded in 1993, Blossom Trust is a grassroots NGO based in the district of Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu, India. With the initial focus on the social and economic empowerment of underprivileged women and a safe and nurturing space for vulnerable children, over time, we have committed to creating a strong foundation for sustainable community ownership. We believe that women have the capabilities to build resilient communities as the pillars of development; therefore, we strongly invest in the empowerment of these women through three main activities. Firstly, by establishing community-based organisations and networks which are primarily women-led. This allows collective action and collaboration to be at the forefront of our interventions, with higher success. Secondly, through advocacy and awareness-raising, we strongly believe that everyone has the right to access information. Knowledge empowerment plays a profound role in community development and allows women in the community to make well-informed decisions for themselves and their households. With our vision, mission and Theory of Change in mind, we have a strong commitment towards women empowerment and community development.

Vision

We envision women at the heart of community development; establishing thriving, equitable and empowered communities across Tamil Nadu

Mission

Promoting women-led development and resilient communities through collective networks, collaboration and awareness-raising

Theory of Change

We are committed to changing the narrative, from women as disadvantaged and impoverished, to women as agents of change and pillars of development; creating the opportunity for them to take ownership and agency, and empowering them to empower their community

Blossom's Values

Inclusivity: We believe in gender equality, achieved through the empowerment of women as agents of change, and the inclusion of all.

Participation: We believe in listening to, acting on, and engaging with the voices and needs of the community, to bridge the gap between the grassroots and global stakeholders.

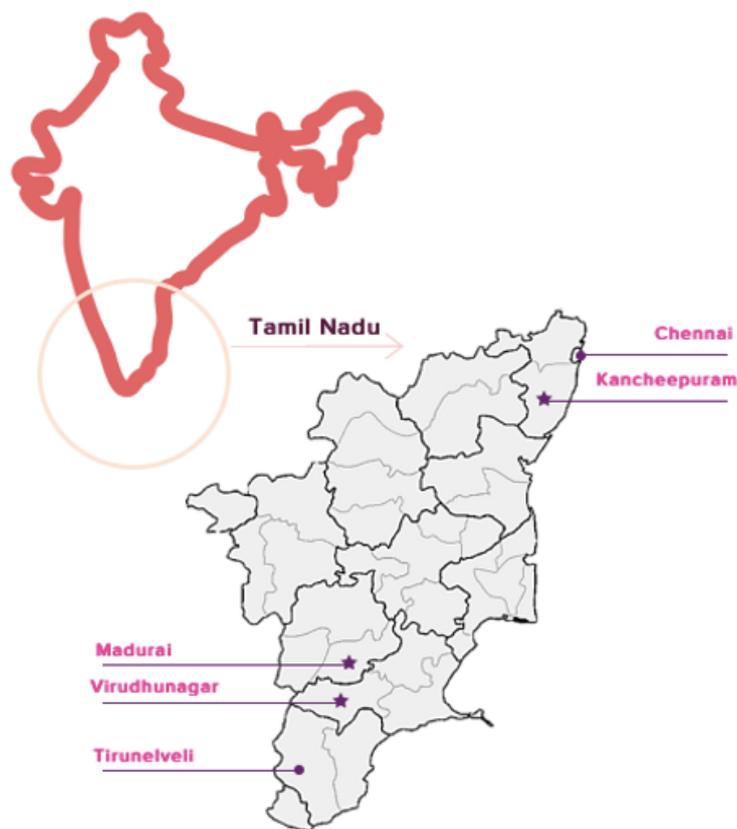
Equity: We believe in the fundamental rights of marginalised groups, through equitable access to healthcare, education, and secure livelihoods.

Resilience: We believe in sustainable practices, with impacts that are tangible, measurable and lasting.

Partnership: We believe in cross-sector collaboration and NGO partnerships, harnessing expertise to generate effective change at the community-level.

Blossom Trust's History and Profile

Blossom Trust has evolved over the years by continuously listening to the voices of the community to improve the lives of the most marginalised. Since its inception, Blossom Trust has played an important role at the grassroots level to effect change for women and marginalised communities in Tamil Nadu. Inspired by the success of EduClowns, a theatre campaign addressing stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV and TB in the community, Father Benjamin Vima Amalan along with Director Mercy Annapoorani brought Blossom Trust to life. What began as a light-hearted platform for raising awareness and education of important health issues that had severe impact on the region has since led to a vast network connecting women, children, and the health and economic sectors of Virudhunagar.



Operating for 28 years, Blossom Trust was one of the first NGOs in the region. We are currently registered under Section 12 A of the Income Tax Act (with tax exemption), the Indian Trust Act, and hold FCRA approval.

Currently, Blossom Trust is operating in the 11 blocks of the Virudhunagar District, in 2 blocks of the Madurai District and in 13 blocks of the Kanchipuram District.

Project Areas

Economic Resilience and Leadership

One of our most important initiatives that has bolstered the sustainability of our impact for 28 years is the facilitation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) among rural women. Formed around topics such as HIV/AIDS, TB and economic empowerment, many groups operate as a mechanism for savings and loans and receive vocational and entrepreneurial training with an aim to become income-generating and self-sufficient. This component of our work has generated a network of over 10,000 people in the community who continue to support each other even after the conclusion of our project cycles.

Women's Rights and Inclusive Welfare

Blossom believes in inclusive welfare for all. Between 1999 and 2014, Blossom ran a Family Counseling Centre (FCC) to sensitise the community on women's and children's rights. In addition to advocating for the prevention of domestic violence and child abuse, the centre provided women and their families with free and confidential psychological and legal services by trained counselors.

Since 2003, Blossom has managed a crèche to care for young children during the day, allowing mothers more time and freedom to work. It has become a vital tool of economic empowerment for women in the community who otherwise face barriers to employment due to their traditional roles as primary caregivers.

Agricultural Development

Blossom has been actively involved in advocating for environmental protection since 2007. From organising street clean-up and awareness campaigns to cultivating a model organic farm on the grounds of Dayspring Home, Blossom is committed to educating the community on sustainable living.

Our planned Agricultural Project developed in 2020 puts female smallholder farmers at the forefront, establishing a women-led Farmers Producers Organisation (FPO) that will connect, empower and invest in female farmers throughout the Virudhunagar District. By addressing key constraints faced by marginalised farmers, such as exclusion from main supply chains and the lack of availability of agricultural information, the FPO will support women as the driving force for community development.

Project Areas

Health Advocacy

We aim to improve the healthcare system to achieve quality healthcare for all. With our many health-oriented projects, Blossom's network within the healthcare sector has grown substantially through the years.

In 2006, our Paneer HIV Positive Women's Network Trust was formed out of a Self-Help Group for HIV/AIDS that was initially focused on savings and microcredit. The network has grown into a district level coordinating agency that raises awareness of HIV/AIDS in the community and improves access to counseling and psycho-social support for women living with HIV/AIDS. Between 2007 and 2018, Blossom implemented the Campaign for Education, Prevention and Treatment of TB (CEPT) with an aim to provide improved TB treatment and monitoring, and to increase awareness of TB in the community. Our Rainbow TB Forum grew out of this project, which advocates for the rights of people living with TB and takes the conversation of the discrimination and stigma they face to the state level.

Since 2018, Blossom has been involved with a targeted intervention in support of the Transgender (TG) community, which has long faced social marginalisation in India. Through a government-backed programme, Blossom supports TG individuals who are at high risk of STI/HIV infection to ensure they have access to quality care and prevention and are treated with dignity when accessing these services.

Dayspring Home and Farm

In 2004, Blossom established Dayspring, a designated children's home, in response to the growing number of children in Virudhunagar lacking access to food, shelter, and education who are infected or have parents who are affected by HIV/AIDS. Dayspring Home has provided a safe and nurturing environment for 20 children, who receive education and care and are guaranteed a bright future.

Blossom Trust Strategy

Building Partnerships

Sustainable development cannot be achieved alone, and we value partnerships that bridge the gap between community needs and local and international resources. Blossom has built its international donor base through establishing partnerships with global stakeholders and running a volunteer and internship program. Many of our projects are implemented in partnership with local and state government, a collaboration we believe is paramount to achieving the best results.

Strong Female Leadership

The Director of Blossom Trust, Mercy Annapoorani, has been with Blossom since its inception in 1993. Committed to continuous learning, she holds a diploma in Theater Arts (1998), a Master of Commerce with a Diploma in Human Resource Development (1999), a Master of Arts in Sociology (2000) and a Master of Women's Studies (2005). She is the recipient of the Kalai Valar Mani Award from the Madurai Arts Club in 1998 and the 2002 International Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life by the World Women's Summit Foundation (WWSF), Switzerland.

Blossom strives to uphold the rights of women and girls, and we are proud to have a managing team and board consisting of mostly women. We encourage gender equality within our organisational structure by providing equal opportunities for women and men to move into leadership roles within the organization. Our outreach workers and peer educations consist of women from local and transgender communities to cultivate effective relationships and build trust amongst our target groups.

Agents of Change

As part of our rebrand in 2020, we moved away from depicting women solely as beneficiaries of our projects and towards putting women in the lead as agents of change. We are committed to shifting the narrative from women as disadvantaged and impoverished to women as pillars of development, creating the opportunity for them to take ownership of projects they are involved in and to drive community development. This narrative will remain central throughout our future projects, to acknowledge the active and powerful role women in our community have had from the formation of our Self-Help Groups to our planned women-led Farmers Producers Organisation.

COVID-19

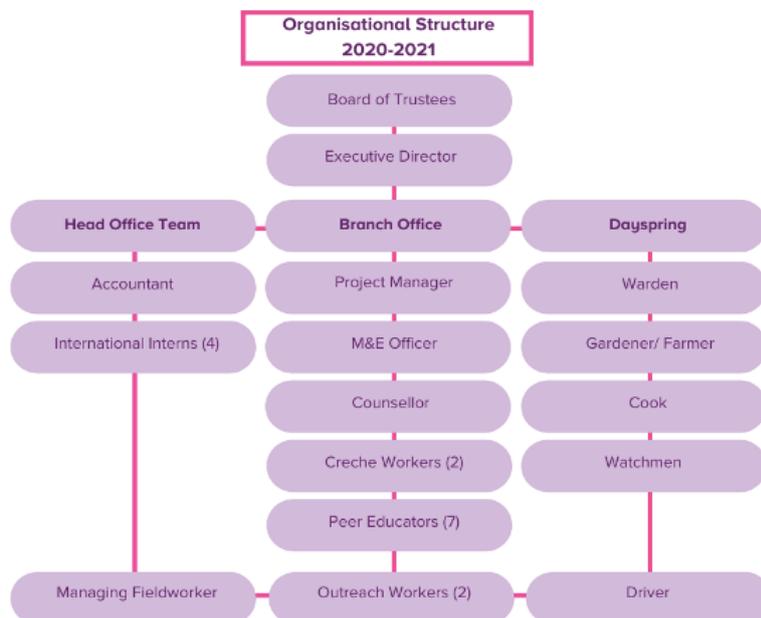
The COVID-19 pandemic hit India for the first time at the beginning of 2020, with severe health, social and economic repercussions on the safety and well-being of the Indian population. The threat posed by the virus has continued over the year 2021, marked by a new wave of positive cases surging in April and reaching its peak towards May-June.

Tamil Nadu has been one of the states most affected by the outbreak of COVID-19, which has added increasing stress on local communities and the most vulnerable segments of society. Blossom Trust has taken immediate action to respond to the threats posed by this pandemic. We have adapted and reassured operations, mobilised resources and implemented ad hoc responses to mitigate the devastating effects of the COVID-19 crisis on our beneficiaries while contributing to national efforts towards the containment of the virus.

Blossom Trust's adaptation measures have been multifold. On the one hand, it is undeniable that our operations have reduced or faced disruption, partly to ensure compliance with social distancing, safety and hygiene norms, and lockdown restrictions, and partly because of financial constraints exacerbated by the pandemic. On the other hand, we have reorganised our priorities to provide emergency relief and support long-term recovery for the hardest hit, marginalised communities. For instance, in 2020, Blossom carried out two ration distributions in Madurai and Chengalpattu to reassure food security for vulnerable households, including beneficiaries with pre-existing health conditions. Additionally, we participated in the government-led Community Intervention program of the Greater Chennai Corporation, conducting house-to-house visits for risk-profiling, patient referral and awareness-raising to trace, treat and contain the virus spread in the Chennai urban area.

Organisational Structure

1. Organisational Structure



2. Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is currently composed of four members, with a prevalence of female members. The Board reunites once every three months and is in charge of the overall management of the organisation, playing a substantial leading role in strategising, dictating future directions and reviewing ongoing progress and decisions implemented at the executive level.

Name of Member	Gender	Age	Qualification	Designation
Mrs. Mercy T. Annapoorani	Female	57	M.Com, M.A, M.S.W	Executive Director/ Managing Trustee
Mrs. G. Vatsala	Female	42	Diploma in C.D.D.M	Trustee
Mrs. B. Mareeswari	Female	45	Diploma in C.D.D.M	Trustee
Mr. C. John Jasper	Male	35	B.E., M.B.A	Treasurer

Organisational Structure

3. Staff

Blossom Trust's team counts permanent, full-time staff and part-time staff, working across our main office in Virudhunagar and our office in Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram district. Here, Blossom's staff consists of project-based personnel in charge of our Targeted Intervention Program in the Transgender community in Chengalpattu.

Type of Staff

Number of Full-Time : 15

Number of Part-Time: 7

In line with the objectives of a female-led, women's empowerment organisation, the composition of Blossom's team aims at inclusivity, with a higher number of female staff in both leading, executive, and field-based roles. We strive to put gender equality at the forefront of our work and incorporate it into all aspects of the organisation. This commitment is also reflected by the composition of our staff. Of the 22 members of our organisation, about 37% are women, whereas over 30% belongs to the local Transgender community, serving as Peer Educators within our beneficiary community in the Kancheepuram district.

4. Internship

Since 2016, Blossom Trust has been running an internship program allowing young professionals to gain professional experience in an NGO and enhance their understanding of the project cycle. With COVID-19, remote work was introduced for all international interns who could not reach India in the short term. The internship program is an asset of Blossom's work, not just for internal capacity but also for its potential to build relationships and connect with organisations, agencies and partners internationally, where interns are based.

Future Strategy Plan

Organisational Structure

Staff

Our key aim going forwards for our staff is to ensure we consistently have funds for five salaried positions for our Virudhunagar Office, including for the Executive Director, Project Manager, Project Coordinator, Accountant, Driver. For our Chennai Office we hope to continue funding for three positions; Project Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and Counselor. In ensuring funding for these we guarantee organisational stability and assure salaries for staff.

Alongside our core staff, we hope to strengthen our internship programme and reduce disruption caused by international travel. In light of this moving forward we have decided to extend the minimum intern contract to 6 months.

Furthermore, we are also looking to start an Apprenticeship/Fellowship programme for students and youth in the community, offering opportunities to transition into full-time staff. Alongside staff on the ground, we are also aiming to introduce remote interns where necessary, offering Blossom Communications and Fundraising support whilst also providing young professionals entering the International Development sector an opportunity to assist in the operations.

Volunteers

Our Volunteer Programme at Dayspring is currently on hold until further notice due to COVID-19. Blossom Trust will welcome both short-stay and long-stay volunteers back to Dayspring Farm when conditions in Tamil Nadu improve and it is considered safe and feasible to resume this program.

Future Strategy Plan II

Programs and Projects

Blossom Trust has been implementing projects for over 28 years in five districts of Tamil Nadu; Madurai, Virudhunagar, Tirunelveli, Chennai and Kancheepuram. Our projects focus on five key areas; Health Advocacy and Patient Networks, Women's Rights and Inclusive Development, Economic Resilience and Leadership and Agricultural and Environmental Development and Dayspring Home and Farm.

Over the next three years, Blossom Trust aims to focus on expanding our Transgender Networks, continuing to increase the resilience of Dayspring, kickstarting our agricultural project and digitise our existing SHGs. We also hope to restart and strengthen our Creche services and promote our EduClown performances.

Transgender Networks

Since 2018 Blossom Trust's Targeted Intervention Project has worked with transgender and minority communities in Kanchipuram. Blossom Trust's team of Peer Educators has focused on condom promotion (distribution and behaviour change communication) and the creation of a toll-free helpline number for High-Risk Groups to register complaints on stigma and discrimination. The project also provides counselling and support services, utilising diverse strategies such as health camps, syphilis testing to identify STIs/HIVs, signposting to medical care centres and frequent outreach.

One of Blossom's core strategies moving forward is to ensure the sustainability of our projects long past the official close of a project cycle. Therefore, our strategy for the Transgender Network over the next three years is to mediate its growth and support the expansion of the network locally whilst increasing its recognition internationally. Our ultimate goal is to move towards becoming self-sustainable.

Agricultural Project

Since our Organisational Strategy 2020-2023 we have developed our agricultural project. Over the period of five years we hope to uplift female farmers' condition from impoverished to agents of change, ultimately enhancing long-term community resilience by building a female-led Farmers Producers Organisation. Sedimenting this into our three year Organisational Strategy 2021-2024 we have created targets, aims, priorities and a timeline, including mobilisation and strengthening our SHGs and establishing our FPO over the next three years.

Future Strategy Plan III

Programs and Projects

Dayspring

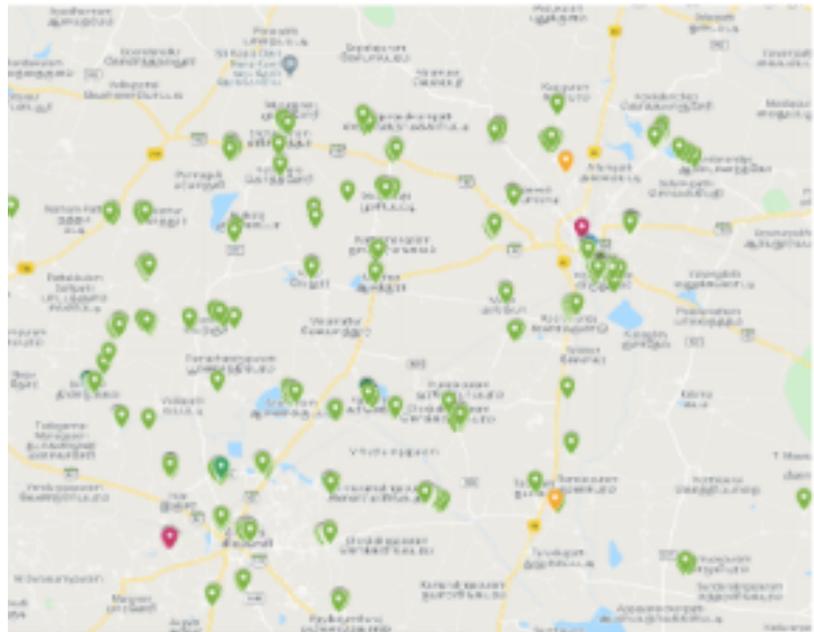
The impact of COVID-19 on Dayspring has resulted in steadily increased food prices leading to potential threats to food security at Dayspring. With this in mind, our key aims for Dayspring Farm are to increase self-sufficiency. Over the next three years we hope to move towards this goal by increasing the number of vegetables grown and livestock owned. Through this, we can consistently provide food from the farm for the children whilst also limiting costs of bringing in food externally, enabling us to spend further funds on education and healthcare.

Self Help Groups

Self Help Groups are integral to the work of Blossom Trust. Beginning as part of a government scheme called the Women's Development Corporation, several SHGs were formed through Blossom Trust.

Today, Blossom Trust has assisted with the formation of hundreds of new SHG initiatives such as our microfinance groups, Poomalai Women's Collective, and our health related networks Paneer Poo for HIV positive women, Survive Sugar for diabetes patients and Rainbow TB Forum for people infected or affected

by tuberculosis. These groups continue to support their members, enhance financial independence and provide the space for communities to lead and make decisions within their own projects. Our Outreach Worker keeps in contact with the leads of the groups. We hope moving forward we can completely digitise our existing SHGs.



Future Strategy Plan III

Programs and Projects

EduClowns

The EduClowns are non-professional actors, coming directly from the local communities, selected from within our network of self-help groups affected by TB and HIV/AIDS. Wearing the mask and clothing of a clown, the performers can step out of themselves, as they are no longer restricted by the traditional boundaries that hold them to the taboo and prevent them from addressing stigma. Due to the impact of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown, during 2020-2021 we have been unable to have any EduClown performances. We have instead, predominantly been focusing our community outreach online and through social media. We hope once the lockdown has lifted and the COVID situation has improved significantly, we can bring the EduClowns back again to raise awareness. Over the next three years we are aiming to strengthen the outreach and training of our EduClowns.

Crèche

Women often experience cultural barriers to becoming self-reliant and economically independent. One of the main barriers to this is the expectation that women are the primary caregivers of children, meaning many women in India do not have the opportunity to take up a career. To assist women to overcome this barrier, the Blossom crèche was created. Our certified caregivers host a group of children in order to allow their young mothers to work. Our crèche has been operational since 2003 and has hosted hundreds of children over the years. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the creche has been closed since March 2020. Over the next three years, Blossom aims to restart our Crèche projects and looks to initiate an expansion of the number of services we offer. We expect our expansion to not only be based on geography and the number of services offered, but also who we are operating for. We hope to cater to women in particular sectors, e.g. women working in local matchstick factories, female farmers in our planned Agricultural Programme.

Fundraising and Communication Strategy

Fundraising Strategy

Crowdfunding

Since 2010 Blossom has been active on GlobalGiving, a crowdfunding platform for organisations and individuals alike. Our network on the platform has grown over the years and we are proud to have both one off and recurring donors. Having one main crowdfunding platform comes with risks, and we have recognized the need to diversify the platforms through which funds are raised, to minimise these risks. Looking forward, we will explore other ways of crowdfunding to limit future risk and increase visibility of these platform.

Grants

Blossom Trust continues to implement programs requiring significant project funding. We intend to utilise the organisation's diverse past experience to illustrate our strengths when seeking a range of funding opportunities under the new strategic objectives. When looking into funding new projects, this means we will remain within our new mandate by focusing our projects on women, gender equality, health, agriculture and children.

Corporate Social Responsibility

In 2014, India became the first country to make CSR mandatory, with gender equality being one of the main topics of CSR compliance. As Blossom Trust is solely dependent on grants and donations, the ability to find a corporate partner through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) would improve the sustainability of our income, which will allow us to increase financial stability. Our goal for the next three years is to establish this as one of three stable income streams, either by finding an interested corporate partner or by using a CSR platform. Possible ideas for project areas for funding could be Dayspring.

Communication Strategy

During 2020-21 Blossom Trust underwent a huge rebrand, including a new logo, website, vision and mission. The aim of the rebrand was to move our focus towards women as leaders, agents of change and pillars in their own communities. Our aim for the next three years is to raise the visibility of Blossom Trust through social media, continue to provide project updates and develop advocacy and awareness materials.

Address

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Registration Details

Registration Number: 85/93
FCRA Approved & Indian Tax Exempt
Date of Registration: 7 June, 1993
Place: Aruppukkottai
Act: Indian Trust Act 1882

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