

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
LOYOLA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS),
CHENNAI.**



RURAL EXPOSURE CAMP

**At Pudhu Keechalam Village, Thiruthani
(24th November to 3rd December 2016)**

**Submitted by:
I Year social work**

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INTRODUCTION

Rural social work perspective is essentially organized by the students of 1st year M.A social work with the guidance of their faculties in Loyola College. It is an attempt to enable students to experience rural life and its systems, to learn about group living and group dynamics, planning, execution, leadership, to gain knowledge on Participatory rural appraisal, social mapping, resource mapping and also on resource mobilization.

This includes identification of the village, pilot visits for identification of projects in the village and liaise with various NGOs and Government officials. As the place for the camp Thiruttani was chosen.

Thiruttani is a town in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, located at 13.18°N 79.63°E; and 78 kilometres (48 miles) from Chennai with a population of 44,781 (as per Census 2011), and sex ratio of 1,003 females for every 1,000 males, well above the national average of 929.

As a part of the social work trainee's interaction with the rural population and their attempts to learn about their overall condition and lifestyle they visited the houses of the villages in the nearby villages. Starting from Keechalam village.

KEECHALAM

Keechalam is a tiny village with cement built houses and roads with around 90 families living in the village. Belonging to lower socio economic strata. People in this village are developed enough to maintain a certain income which is sufficient to help them keep up with the daily requirements of life. Average being 8,000 per month up to 15,000 depends upon the no. of working people in the family.

Average number of members in a family ranges from 4 -5 members, and the most Common mode of transport in this area is government bus, share auto and two wheelers.

The major occupation in this region is sugar cane cultivation and 100 days of government employment. In terms of social issues child marriages, alcoholism and unemployment have been the major root cause here. Some people do educate their children (both male and female) up to degree and these educated children works out of village, and few are even settled in abroad or have moved to Chennai.

The people living in this area are near to bus stop which connects them to the nearby town and interior places of village, thus travel is not a big issue in new keechalam. They follow Christianity and Hinduism. Most of them also own concrete houses constructed through government house loan.

People in this area are governed by panchayat leader and almost half of the population have been educated at least with a 12th grade. All the men in this area were working and about 60% of women were also working. People were benefited by the government built house, and majority of the people had TV, grinder at their place.

Politically most of the ST Caste people in this community only voted for ADMK Party and other caste tend to vote for DMK. And culturally, it was shared that this village do not have dowry system; instead the boy's family spends for the marriage ceremony. Deepawali, Christmas, and pongal is their main festivals.

Major problems faced by people also include Poor medical facilities (no nearby hospitals till 6 to 8 Km distance), dropouts, High Unemployment Rate, Low level of Education, Cases of Child marriage and Issues regarding Inter caste marriage.

PONDERVEDU

Pondervedu is situated at 12 Km from Podoturpet. This area comprised of 300 families of SC caste with majority being followers of ADMK political party and few people follow DMK party. Their major occupation is cultivation, Animal rearing, selling milk and 100 days of government employment. Most of the people travel to other places like Chennai, or major cities to work.

In terms of social issues - child marriages, alcoholism and unemployment have been the major root cause here. Problems faced by people in the community also includes Water scarcity. A kid 17 years old was told to say that she is 19 years when asked because her marriage is fixed and her parents do not want to reveal her true age.

Drastic hamper to the life style of people has been caused due to demonetization too.

Economically this area comprise of people with temporary or seasonal occupations. These people are so socially excluded that seeing the students

some of them shut the doors keeping students out and some even hide inside the houses to avoid the interaction.

KAKKINALLUR

People in the Kakkinallur are among the most backward class, previously their tribe used to work as snake charmers, but now they have altered their occupations. This village has a population of around in 110 people residing in 27 “kooari veeda”.

Most of the men in the area had gone to shabari malai, and the rest had gone for work when the students visited this area.

Majority of the families in this area sustain their food requirements with 25 KG rice for the whole month which they somehow buy based on their income of 300 INR they get.

One of the significant social issues faced by the people here is child marriage to maternal relatives. They have problems of Alcoholism, Polygamy, Lack of education and Lack of medical facilities. Some of the other occupation these people have taken up include hunting, selling shikha, and performing temporary jobs.

They pray to goddess “Nagalamal”. The people in this region maintained a certain level of secrecy resulting from their inferiority complex as reported by the sister accompanying the students; the people were reluctant to share information.

This area had only 2 children who had studied up till 10th class and all other children are dropouts. Good thing about this place – they do not have dowry system, but they do follow offering animals as sacrifices in the religious places. They also eat rats, cats and mangoes.

KESHVARAJA KUUPAM

Keshavaraja Kuupam comprise of the people belonging to the Irulas Community. The village was not a very developed area and there were around 40 families in the village, and the Socio economic condition of the village was very poor. They were not even educated. People here have to strive hard to meet their basic needs by doing daily wage jobs with no permanency.

Average number of members in a family was 4 and their Major occupation was hunting. Common mode of transport was government bus, share auto and two wheelers and most of the people belonged to SC caste Hindus. This place only have Hindu religion followers.

Alcoholism and child marriage are the major social issue in this place and it had Buildings, and houses with sheets.

Monthly income of the families here is 3000rs per month. This place is located about 20km from DMI institution. This area is led by panchayat leader and ADMK was the ruling party.

Majority of the people here were Uneducated and only men were working in almost all the families. It was found that the young girls in the village were hiding their age as they didn't wanted outsiders to know about their original age; and when asked the reason for not going to school the most common reply given was that they sleep off in the morning due to which they miss the school every day.

It was quoted by a student “those people are as same as we are, there’s just difference in spirituality” leading to them eating cats, and we eat beef.

They have really low income, Even to meet their basic needs of buying food items or medical facilities they have to travel Kilometers, They don’t get any daily wages; They experience social exclusion.

They also had cases of child pregnancy due to which they stopped sending girls to school after the age of 8 years. Lack of awareness; Child marriage; Water scarcity; No toilets; Alcoholism and Superstitions that – other people eating beef can are not allowed in during marriages, all prevails here.

Social issues also include reserved character of people and Inequality of women, exists specially in the context of occupation and education.

There are 30 dropouts in this area who have joined their parents in their family job. As In their case they have to go ask for job from higher caste people. Some who are given a job would usually be some low job with no proper wages. Even in case of the Government scheme they get, the authority from the higher caste take up all the benefits for the schemes.

KEELAPUDI

Keelapudi, is located at 4 Km from Podoturpet, comprise of 600 families belonging to of SC and BC caste; where mostly everybody follow ADMK and very few people follow DMK. Their major occupation is sugar cane cultivation and 100 days of government employment. They do perform child marriages.

It comprise of people belongin to Scheduled Caste and telagu naidus castes. Here higher caste and the lower caste discrimination was very prominent and also the practice of Untouchability. Wherein in tea stalls the S.C people will be provided with use and throw glass, while the higher caste people are provided with Glass tumblers.

Due to which the villagers went to polices station and after a long struggle they decided that lower caste won't go to higher caste places. But only have superficial relation.

Transport is a critical issue for these people as they live quite far from bus stop which connects keelapudi. They follow Christianity and Hinduism. Some of them own concrete houses through government house loan where many use kurai vedu. The people on this area had more unity even with multiple religiosity which is highly visible in their practices of festival celebration wherein people belonging to all religions participates together.

NEEDUNGAL and PUNNIYAM

While interacting with people it was found that the people in that area were not able to comprehend in their mind the idea of having a toilet inside their home. It was also found that majority of the people in the village were well educated but most were unemployed.

When asked about the issues, it was reported that smoking and drinking are the major issues the women in the area faces but then they also stated straight that their men can't stop quite smoking no matter how much their wife's say against it.

One of the major employment schemes these people indulged in is 100 day employment scheme which was said to be making the people in the village lazy and demotivating them to do agriculture.

The people also reported that earlier child marriage was a common phenomenon in this village but latterly with the increase in the level of knowledge the instances of child marriage has also gone down drastically.

It was pointed that play on child marriage could have been done here as people could have associated with it better here.

Overall, it's identified that – Alcoholism, Superstitious believes, Unemployment, Patriarchal society, high dropout rates, lack of electricity, lack of transport, low medical facilities and caste system are the major issues that people living in these villages face.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it was not just the social work trainees who were affected by the camp and visits to these villages but changes were also brought in the community which was impacted by the cultural programs and the street plays projected by the trainees. Somewhere the trainees were also able to act as the future mirror of dreams for the children in the village to have a glimpse into their own future; wherein, one day they can grow up to be college students like the trainees and work for the betterment of the people struggling for existence.