



# RURAL DISTRESS ON WOMEN FARMER

AN IMPACT STUDY  
7<sup>TH</sup> TO 17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY' 2017

**Tamilnadu Federation of Women Farmers' Rights**  
**A state unit of MAKAAM- Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch**

# TAMILNADU FEDERATION FOR WOMEN FARMERS' RIGHTS

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### The Context:

Women Farmers, in India, play a crucial role in food production and processing. Around 65.5% of economically active women in India are engaged in agriculture constituting about 37% of the total agricultural work force. About 60-80% of food production and 90% of dairy products are produced by women producers. On an average, a woman spends nearly 3300 hours in the field in a crop season as against 1860 hours by a man. They also engage in important on-farm activities that are not solely cultivation-oriented. The tasks of keeping milch animals, small ruminants and backyard poultry (which can be important sources of supplementary income for poor farm families and agricultural labourers) are typically performed by women in the household. Yet women are not recognised as farmers.

Legal recognition of farmers in India usually comes from land ownership. According to agriculture census 2010-11, only 12.69 % rural women have operational land ownership. As this includes land lease data, it is understandable that secure land ownership in rural India is abysmally low. 74 % of the India's rural women workforce is engaged in agriculture as against 59 % of the male workforce<sup>1</sup>; but only 12.69% are legally recognized as farmers.

Woman's low land ownership and recognition as a farmer limits her access to government schemes, subsidies, agriculture resources, credit etc. Often, legal recognition shapes social recognition and vice-versa, and further limits women farmers' participation in the agriculture training programs, decision making at private and public level, and participation in the community based institutions. Women farmers do not have control over land and decision making related to farming. When a woman farmer commits suicide, she is neither counted nor is her family compensated— because she doesn't own land and she is not counted as a farmer. The 2014 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data on farmer suicides shows that of the 5,650 farmers who took their lives, 472 were women. Farmer suicide data only includes farmers with land titles<sup>2</sup>. Non-recognition of women as farmers, often, makes them invisible in macro agriculture policies and investment into agriculture. Investment usually favour mechanized farming and big machineries often controlled by men than small agriculture equipment and organic agriculture preferred by women farmers.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/land-their-own>

<sup>2</sup>Catch News: 100,000 women, 10 years, one demand: let us own our farmland; SABITA PARIDA & SAWY SOUMYA MISRA | 2 October 2015

According to FAO if women have equal access to productive resources like men; agriculture productivity of developing countries can increase by 2.5- 4% and can reduce number of undernourished people in the world by 12-17 %. Women farmers' recognition and access to resources can significantly change the status of hunger and malnutrition for an agriculture dependent and malnourished country like India. Recent report of FAO "The State of Food Insecurity in World" states that India is home to 194.6 million undernourished people, the highest in the world. Global Hunger Index ( GHI) released by the International Food Policy Research Institute rank India in the 97<sup>th</sup> spot in a ranking of 118 countries.

Further Unequal wage payment, increasing unpaid care burden are few of the constraints women farmers and agriculture labourers face in rural India. Gender wage gap is highest in farming sector; men earn 162 times higher than women for the similar kind of job. Women farmers are also increasingly facing time poverty for managing both field and housework; in the period 2011-12, for the females aged 15-29 time spent in domestic work has been increased from 54.8 % to 57.5 % and for 30-44 year age group it increased from 52.5 to 65.8<sup>3</sup>. It has to be mentioned that the caring economy do not find value or place in market economy which determines the state policy and budget allocations in today's context.

Besides, changing climate is posing additional threats for women farmers. India with 650 million populations dependent on rain-fed agriculture has been identified as one amongst the 27 countries which are the most vulnerable to the impacts of global warming related accelerated sea level rise<sup>4</sup>. A report issued by the World Bank suggests that India's economic progress could be severely hampered, with an additional 45 million pushed into poverty, due to the effects of climate change<sup>5</sup>. Women farmers are discriminatorily impacted by changing climate due to socio-cultural norms and existing structural barriers.

## **Drought Situation in Tamilnadu- emergence of this Study:**

**"penchu kedukkudhu Illa kanchikedukkudhu" –a statement by a woman farmer (meaning "excessive rain or no rain, both spoils")**

In general, four major parameters determine the nature and extent of drought conditions in Tamilnadu: (1) rainfall, (2) ground water, (3) reservoir levels, and (4) crop conditions. With the cumulative rainfall for October and November at 10 cm (till 30 November), Tamil Nadu started it's worst drought since 1876. With Karnataka refusing to release Tamil Nadu's

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<sup>3</sup>[http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_204762/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_204762/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>4</sup>Climate Change and coastal ecosystem in India. Issues in Perspectives. Senapati& Gupta. Vol 5. No 3. International Journal of Environmental Sciences

<sup>5</sup>Shock Waves: Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty. 2016.Hallegatte et al. The World Bank

share of Cauvery water, the minimal discharge of water from Mettur dam—the entry point in Tamil Nadu, from where it is released to farmers—has not helped farming. The consequent inadequacy of rains for the last four to five years and the total failure of the northeast monsoon during the year 2016 have only made matters worse. Except very few regions where there is availability of ground water near in the coastal and hilly regions, most of the rural parts in the state is facing severe drought and entering into the stage of Famine.

While a 19% deficit in the southwest monsoon (June- September) hit the kuruvai crops, the northeast monsoon has turned into a huge blow for the samba crop. Kuruvai is an early season short-term crop and samba is a longer rice-growing season. The rice growing belt is severely affected all over the state.

Though Tamilnadu Agriculture constitutes 7% of GDP the women farmers contribute 90% for this sector. However, the land ownership and decision making over irrigation, access to common property resources and other agricultural inputs for women farmers is very limited. The survival of agricultural production is mostly dependent on informal lease holders and marginal farmers in Tamilnadu. Progressive legislation like the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Lands (Records of Tenancy Rights) Act 1969 and the Tamil Nadu Kudiyiruppu (Conferment of Ownership) Act 197 helped landless labourers access small pieces of land. However, 10% of the rich hold 55% of arable land in the state (Tamil Nadu economic appraisal – 2008-09)

In Tanjavur district alone 28,862 new trusts with 1,98,270 acres of land were created by landlords in order to circumvent the ceiling acts(report of the special duty collector, public trusts, tanjore,pp 4-5). Apart from this, around 1,80,000 hectares comprising 2% of all cultivable land and 5.25 percent of all surface irrigated lands are under the control of temples and matths in the State. Nearly 12 lakh of acres of panchami land, allotted to Dalit communities during pre-independence times, continues to remain out of access to Dalit men and women. Government data shows only around 2 lakh acres are now in the hands of Dalits.

In such situation, there were reports on media about sudden deaths and suicides committed by farmers due to crop failure and in this context a team from **Tamilnadu Federation for Women Farmers' Rights** decided to meet women farmers across six districts and bring out a report for seeking immediate and long term solutions to the crisis and for wider attention. It is well known that though men outnumber women in deaths, the burden of debt, taking care of dependents, particularly aged, children has become humongous task for women farmers, particularly dalit women farmers. Hence, the federation is focused upon impact of this rural distress on women from the perspective of marginalized sections of the society.

***Tamilnadu Federation for Women Farmers' Rights is the Tamilnadu chapter of MAKAAM.(Mahila Kissan Adhikar Manch). It is an Alliance of networks, campaigns, movements, organisations, people's collectives and individuals who advocate, for the Right to Livelihood of women farmers , particularly the dalits, adivasis, single women, differently abled and displaced. It is guided by principles of feminism and sustainability for economic, environmental and social justice. The Federation believes that this vision will be achieved through a gender responsive and democratic process. Collective and cooperative enterprise-building will be the means to sustain alternative food production and knowledge systems. Through secular, autonomous and peaceful means, it works to bring fundamental change in the social norms and institutions that deny human rights , and prohibit the advancement of women and other social groups.***

### **The study team**

A team consisting of seven members namely Dr.Fatima Burnard Natesan, Ms.Vimala, Ms. Gracy ,Ms.Kalpana, Ms. Geetha, Ms. Sivakami and Ms. Saraswathi was constituted to study the impact of drought on women farmers, particularly the families where farmers death happend. The team members have been working with women's issues, livelihood issues and policy issues for a long time. The team travelled to six districts with the help of farmers' organizations, women's federations and Non-Governmental Organizations. The visits were between 7<sup>th</sup> January to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017.The following report is an attempt to give the socio economic context of women farmers affected by drought.

### **The Districts covered:**

Thirvannamalai

Villupuram

Thiruvarur

Nagapattinam

Tanjavor

Pudukottai

## **Persons and Organizations Interviewed:**

- Wife, children of the deceased
- Relatives of the deceased
- Neighbors of the deceased
- Village Heads
- Women Farmers and Agricultural Workers in the respective villages
- Cauvery Farmers' Association
- Civil Society Organisations working in the concerned District

## **Villages Visited**

1. Thokkavadi, Thiruvannamalai District
2. Kanagankuppam, Villupuram District
3. Devanampettai, Villupuram District
4. Kadambankudi, Nagapattinam District
5. Pirinjamulai, Nagapattinam District
6. Keezhaiyur, Nagapattinam District
7. Renganathapuram, Thiruvarur District
8. Adhichapuram, Thiruvarur District
9. Chinnaponnappu, Tanjore District
10. VandaiyarIruppu, Tanjore District
11. Kothamangalam, Pudukottai District
12. Vadakadu, Pudukottai District
13. Mangakadu, Pudukottai District

### **1. Ms. Parvathy from Thokkavadi , Chengam Taluk, Thiruvannamalai district:**

Parvathi's husband Thangavelu passed away due to cardiac arrest after witnessing crop failure and with the pressure to repay Rs.50,000 which he had taken for 5% interest. The family is absolutely landless and had taken two acres of land under informal leasing from a Government employee belonging to the village who is living in the nearby town Chengam. Parvathy is 57 years old now started working as an agricultural labourer at the age of 9. She and her husband worked as agricultural labourers and for past five years they have been cultivating the land they had taken for lease. Last three years there was no yield and they were paying for sowing,

planting, weeding and dispensing pesticides. Parvathy also stated that at least five times they carry out pest control for an yield which was a major expenditure for them. She also stated that they spent Rs. 1700 for purchasing seeds and Rs.20,000 for pesticides per yield. There was no water in their land and they were sharing water from the neighbouring land. But this year the neighbours could not share water since they themselves were running short. There is no water in the cheyyar river which used to be flowing near the village. There was sand mining in the river and it was stopped five years back. Parvathy stated that it is also a reason for the reduction of ground water table.

Parvathy belongs to Panniyandi community which is listed as a Dalit community. She is mother of five children and all are married. Her eldest son Narayanan is a migrant labourer. Her daughter Kavita is widowed with three girl children and they are dependent on Parvathy for their survival. Her younger son Anand who is employed as an electrician in town panchayat does not support the family, locks the house preventing Parvathy and the daughter's family to enter into the house. He is claiming the ownership of the house since he had done last rites for the father. So far there is no compensation paid to Parvathy but she wants to continue farming and cattle rearing. She wants some security to the widowed daughter and a dignified life in her house without the threat of her second son.



***The study team found that the death of Mr. Thangavelu is due to drought and the consistent pressure he was facing due to the monsoon failure in his leased in land, which is informal and have no support from the government.***

***The study team observed that Ms. Parvathy should be immediately brought under widow pension scheme and provided with 2 acres land with support system for irrigation and with agricultural inputs. Parvathy's widowed daughter Ms. Kavita should be guaranteed with government employment.***

**2. Ms.Kalaiarasi from kanagankuppam, Chenchi taluk, Villupuram district**

Kalaiarasi's husband Murugan was 55 years old and he had taken 2 acres of land for lease. One acre was leased five years back and another one acre was taken two and a half years back. Apart from that they also owned 90 cents of land. The land on lease was owned by Murugan's uncle. Kalaiarasi worked in the land taken for lease, worked in other lands and under NREGA scheme to make both ends meet. For an yield they made Rs 60,000 but after deducting expenditure they made a profit of Rs.30,000 only.

Their elder son has done M.SC, B.Ed and teaching in a private school earning Rs.5000 per month. Second son has done his B.C.A employed in a mobile shop as a sales man at Chennai earns Rs. 8000. They have taken a loan of nearly five lakhs and they have pledged 12 sovereigns of gold taken from her sister in law and sister. She



does not have title deed for the house she lives in. When the crop failed Murugan could not take stress, had a cardiac arrest and fainted in the field and on the way to hospital he passed away. This happened on 4/jan/17 and post mortem was done. Kalaiarasi wants to continue farming for livelihood. She wants her sons to be employed in Government sector.

Kalaiarasi belongs to Vanniyar Community which is listed under most backward caste(MBC) . Kalaiarasi has not received any relief so far and Rs.17000 taken from cooperative bank has been written off. She stated that the reason for crop failure and lack of water is due to the encroachment in the water ways. She wanted them to be cleared before next rains and specifically she mentioned about nandan canal which is an important water resource to be cleared.

***The study team observed that this family of Ms. Kalaiarasi is with heavy burden of indebtedness due to failure of crops and for educating her sons. Kalaiarasi should be provided with irrigation support and monetary compensation for the death of her husband. One of her son should be provided with government job.***

### 3. Ms. Pavun from Devanampettai ,Chenchi taluk ,Villupuram District

Pavun's husband Murugan had taken 3 acres of land and they were cultivating paddy. Half of the yield was given to the land owner. The village is under severe drought and women are struggling to fetch drinking water. Looking at the failing crops Murugan hanged himself on 2/jan/17 leaving a note about the debt. The debt was to the tune Rs.35,000 for 3% interest and around 6 gms of gold. They have two sons and the elder one is in college and the younger one is in class ten. Pavun has to take care of the children and the elderly father in law. This family belongs to Vanniyar community which is a most backward caste(MBC) ! They have received Rs.5000 from the local MLA Mr.Masthan.

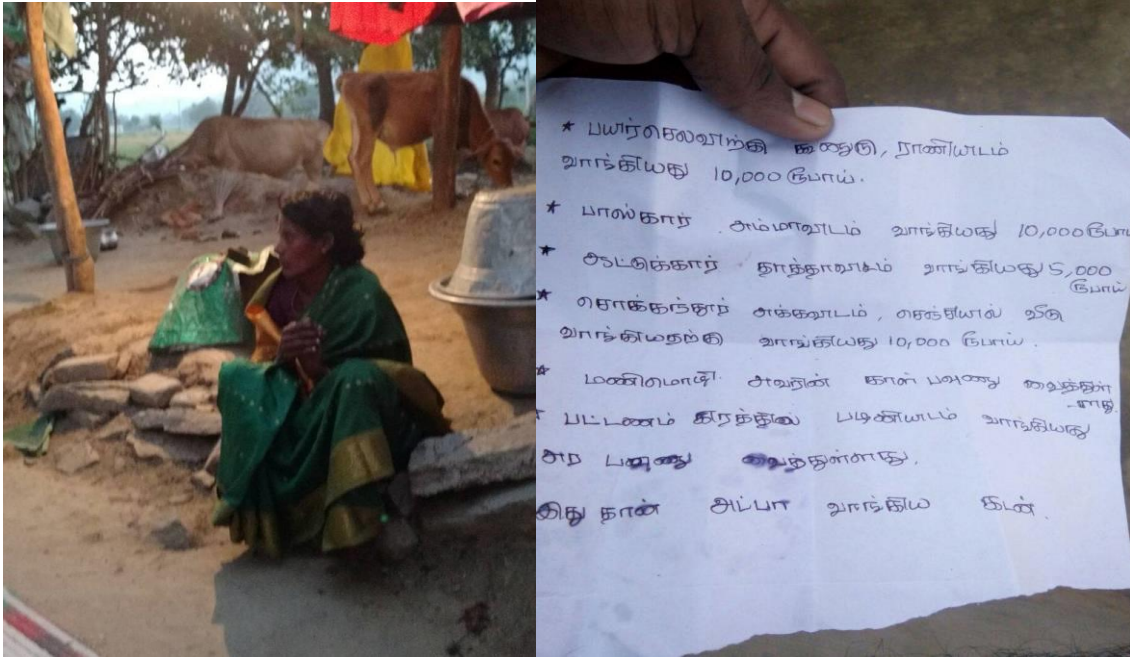


Photo of Pavun and Suicide Note left by Murugan.

The whole village is suffering without water for drinking as well as for cattle. Valli, the neighbor of Pavun also a farmer who leased in land of 2 acres along with her husband's 2 acre own land facing similar crisis. She laments saying "we are all in extreme tension and I thought I would have died as I too had severe palpitation moving from my stomach to chest after seeing the field where the paddy is getting dry day by day. But Anna Murugan committed suicide".



*The study team observed that Murugan was forced to take a call for suicide due to the big loss he faced in his 3 acres land. Now Pavun w/of Murugan is left with the an old father in law and 2 growing up sons who are still studying. Late Murugan's father should be provided with old age pension which would reduce Pavun's hardship to support him.*

*The study team recommends that Ms. Pavun should be provided with immediate monetary compensation and support to continue the agriculture. Her sons should be provided with educational assistance to complete their higher education.*

**The team moved to Nagapattinam district** where the Cauvery water was opened for hardly 20 days against the supreme court judgment which stated that the river should be flowing for 180 days and failure of implementation of this judgment has resulted in severe drought in delta districts. The office bearers of **Cauvery Farmers' Association** stated that there has to be a political will to implement the judgement of Supreme Court and this year it was opened only for 20 days. Very few farmers managed to irrigate water with diesel engines. But the hire charges is Rs. 1000 for ten hours and it would take twenty hours to irrigate one acre of paddy field. Since they could not manage the expenses they gave up. Most of the lands in this region are owned by religious organizations namely Thiruvaaduthurai aadheenam, Dharmapuram aadhenam and Thirupananthal aadheenam. The farmers leasing these lands pay as paddy or money. We also got to hear it is 3 quintals of rice per acre.

4. Ms. Kavita from Kadambankudi, keelvezhur taluk, Nagapattinam district.



Kavita is a 29 year old young woman who has studied up to higher secondary. She is mother of two daughters at the age of three and a half and two. Kavita's husband Veeramani was thirty years old and was an agricultural labourer. Veeramani took a one and half acres of land for lease for which he paid Rs.50,000 .They also spent Rs.25,000 for cultivation of paddy. When the crop failed he got depressed and had a cardiac arrest. Veeramani was worried that both his children are girls. It is a poor Dalit family and they do not have title deed for their house. Kavita's father is no more and her mother is too old to support her. Kavita's brother is a migrant labourer and lost one leg while working and now manages to move around with an artificial leg. Kavita tried for the job of a helper in the Government noon meal scheme . She did not get the job since she could not pay the bribe of Rs75,000. Due to the Cauvery crisis , the water was opened for 20 days only which killed the crops. Due to salinaization the underground water in the district cannot be used for agriculture.

*The study team observed that now Kavita is totally deserted agricultural worker and left with nothing as the farm her husband worked was af Leased one. Her two daughters are malnourished and her entire parental and maternal family is poverty stricken.*

*The study team strongly recommend for immediate monetary compensation with the guarantee of 2 acres of land, government job as she has completed 12<sup>th</sup> std.*

**5. Ms. Rani from pirinjimulai, Thalaignayiru taluk , Nagapattinam district.**

Rani (40) and her husband Murugaiyan (48) had taken three acres of land for lease and paid Rs. 80,000 for taking that lease .Apart from that they had invested on cultivation. They have a daughter who is in class twelve. Their son is 11 years old and mentally challenged. Rani does not go out since the son needs constant care. When the crops failed Murugaiyan was heart broken and hanged himself. When he hanged himself while his mentally challenged son was watching. Rani was sent out to get beetle leaves when he committed suicide. Rani's father is disabled and he is not in a position to support Rani . Rani cannot even to go for 100 days work leaving the son behind. This family belongs to Vanniyar community which is listed under most backward caste. (MBC).

*The team found that Rani is left with disabled son, old aged father and a studying daughter without any support for survival.*

*Rani should be provided with monetary compensation and 2 acres of land with irrigation support. The disabled child should be provided with government support for care and education.*



**6. Ms. Amudha from Keezhaiyur, keezhvelur taluk, Nagapattinam district.**

The team attended the funeral of Venkatachalam (47) husband of Amudha(39) .He was cultivating paddy in four acres of land out of which two acres he had taken for lease and he owned two acres. The field was just behind his house. When there was no water opened from Cauvery the crops started drying. For this village the water flows from kollidam through pappanar canal and erukkadi stream..Earlier his son had died in a road accident on Diwali day during the month of October. The crop failure and debts started pressurizing him. When he saw the cattle grazing in his paddy field he was heart broken and had a cardiac arrest in the field itself. The ponds near his field had also dried up. His daughter is studying D.M.L.T (Diploma in Medical Lab Technician course) in Thanjavur Medical college. The second daughter is in class eleven. The relatives are not in a position to support their education. Around this time the team also heard that Government had stated that

without filing a First Information Report (FIR) the death would not be counted as a farmer's death.



*The study team suggest along with monetary compensation for the family that the daughter named Devi of Amudha should be provided with educational assistance to complete her studies and provided with government job.*

*All support for continuing agriculture with recognition of Amudha as a Farmer should be guaranteed.*

The office bearers of **Cauvery Farmers 'Association** says that there has to be a political will to implement the judgement of Supreme Court and this year Cauvery was shared only for 20days. Very few farmers managed to irrigate water with diesel engines. But the hire charges are Rs. 1000 for ten hours and it would take twenty hours to irrigate one acre of paddy field. Since they could not manage the expenses they gave up. Most of the lands in this region are owned by religious organizations namely Thiruvaaduthuraiaadheenam, Dharmapuramaadhenam and Thirupananthalaadheenam..They also insisted on building check dams for every two kilometres and clearing water ways. They also want the Government to pay Rs.25,000 as compensation for every acre of failed crops.





*Anandi, sister in law of Rajalakshmi sharing the distress faced by women and cattles due to no drinking water.*

There are 17 farmers' deaths registered in that Nunakkadu Panchayat Union and 50 cattle have died without water. The community wants compensation for both the losses. The farmers also want the lakes Idaikilaiyur, idaimelaiyur, Vaduvloor and Thiruverumbur to be desilted. The sea is 10kilometres away from the village due to which the underground water is saline. The women farmers demand for proactive measures from the government for the prevention of salinization. They also insisted that the entire water way of Salvanaru up to the sea should be cleared.

**The study team suggested that the family of Govindaraj should be provided with adequate compensation to continue the farming.**

## 8. Ms. Arokiamary from Aadichapuram, Thiruvarur district

Arokiamary (33) and her husband Azhagesan(36) have three children. The eldest daughter is doing graduation, the second daughter is in class eleven and the third son is in class Nine. They had taken 2 acres of land for lease for past seven years they have been cultivating the land. They had paid Rs 18000 to take the land on lease. On 4/January he went to the field and he was heart broken to see the dried crops. He had a cardiac arrest in the field and passed away. Arokiamary is helpless with an aged mother in law and three children.



*Arokiamary with her mother in law*

***The study team found that Ms. Arokiamary is left with her mother in law and 3 children to survive and suggest that the Ms. Arokiamary should be provided with 2 acres of land and educational assistance for her 3 children.***

The office bearers of “**Cauvery Farmers’ Association**” stated about the failing monsoon, climate change and it’s impact on farming. They expressed concerns about Golden Vats liquor company sucking ground water and it’s impact on farming in the region. They also discussed the issue of water ways clearing and improving ground water table with City Union Bank which was willing to give rupees five Crores for the project. But the Association could not get the approval of State Government on this and the entire project was dropped. They expressed concerns over the presence of Shell gas company and Oil and Natural Gas Company (ONGC) which extract gas and it’s impact on the agriculture in the region.



*Representatives of Cauvery Farmers Association in Thiruvavur District*

### **9. Mr. R. Ganesan (59) ChinnaPonaappu ,Orathanadu taluk,Thanjavur district**

Mr. Ganesan's wife passed away long back. They have three daughters and three sons. For past few years the yield has not been good in his four acres of land. He tried Urad dal instead of paddy but even that failed. For past six months the bore well motor did not work well due to the low voltage issue. This has stressed Ganesan and apparently he had a cardiac arrest on 5/january /17 and passed away.

The family expressed their concerns over depleting ground water table .In their village bore wells are drilled upto 400 feet. They also stated the compensation of Rs.5000 is not enough and the cultivation expenses cost nearly Rs. 25,000. They also stated that waterways like vadavar and Vennar should be cleared for irrigation and ground water recharging.

They belong to Kallar community which is a backward community and they stated there are agricultural lands registered in the name of women too.

***The study team suggest that the family of Ganesan and the community should be provided with support for electricity and the low voltage issue has to be sorted out along with providing monetary compensation for the loss.***

**10. Ms. Amudharani (45)from Kothamangalam , Alangudi taluk, Pudukottai district**

The team walked into eighth day ceremony of Valarmathi (57) where the relatives and the village community had gathered. He was working as a surveyor and he had two acres of land . But due to the presence of Eucalyptus trees the ground water table has gone down In the region The water level in Valarmathi's field went down to 1200 feet. This situation paralysed his farming. His debts were to the tune of Rs. 10 lakhs and he was paying 5% interest. Their first daughter has done her B.A,B.ED and working as a teacher in a private school earning Rs.2000.The second boy is both physically and mentally challenged and the third daughter is in class ten. The family does not have livelihood options and shattered. This family belongs to Mutharaiyar community which is listed as a Backward Community (BC).



*The study team found that Ms. Amudharani is left with 2 adolescent daughters and a disabled son. The team suggest that the daughter who has studied B.Ed should be provided with a teacher's job in a government school. The disabled son should be provided with disability assistance along with monetary compensation for debt relief.*

## **10. Pavalakodi (55) from Vada kadu village ,Alangudi Taluk, Pudukottai district**

Pavalakodi's husband Ramasamy (62) had 100 kuzhi of land which can be explained as one third of an acre. They were cultivating a flower called kaattumalligai which is a jasmine variety without fragrance. There was no water in the field. They were spending RS.300 for every time they watered the field. The neighbouring motor has to run for six hours to water the field. But still the crop failed and Ramasamy had a cardiac arrest and he was taken to Pudukottai General hospital and declared dead. They have a son who is working as an acting driver but does not earn regularly. The farmers in the village blamed the "karl's liquor factory" in Kallakottai for sucking ground water impacting agriculture in that region.

**Ms. Pavalakodi should be provided with 2 acres land for agriculture with irrigation support. The family should be given with monetary compensation.**

## **11. Chinnatha of Mangadu, Alangudi Taluk ,Pudukottai District**

Chinnatha's husband Marimuthu(68) had owned 2 and 3/4 of acres of land. The family belongs to Mutharaiyar community which is listed as a Backward caste. They cultivated, plantains, groundnuts and corn. They don't have water resource in the field and they were dependent on neighbour's borewell. The groundwater level was affected by eucalyptus trees in the region. They were paying Rs.50 per hour to irrigate their fields. Beyond a point the neighbour could not share water. This year they had cultivated ground nut in two acres of land. Mari muthu who went to the field was quite distressed by the failing crops had a cardiac arrest in the field and passed away.

Marimuthu had three children. The elder boy and the daughter are married. The third boy has gone to Singapore as a casual labourer earning around 16 Singapore dollars per day. To send this boy to Singapore Marimuthu had taken two and a half lakh rupees as loan. This situation was also taxing for him.

The family stated that the compensation of Rs 5000 is nothing for people cultivating plantain. According to them the compensation should be around Rs. 25,000. They also shared about the plight of cattle without water .

***The study team found that Chinnatha family is left with indebtedness and suggest that government should provide with debt relief compensation.***



*The study team on the field at Thokkavadi with the family of Parvathi*

## **Recommendations**

The study team observed that most of the farmers' deaths and suicides happen among informal land leasing farmers and marginal farmers who own less than 3 acres of Land. The women member of the family face the consequences of the death severely along with the burden of debt, which is also informal and private along with taking care of elderly persons, young children, disabled members of the family. All the women members of the deceased are also farmers and they have equally or more contributed to the farming for many years and depend on agriculture for their future survival.

### **Immediate Relief and Compensation**

- The rural distress situation should be considered as Famine and war time action to be taken to safeguard the people of rural Tamilnadu with provision of food, drinking water for all including Livestock.

- The imposition of post mortem and filing of FIR for recognition of farmers' death should be removed and death recognized by local panchayats /revenue official investigation should be taken as a record for provision of compensation and relief.
- All families of deceased should be provided with Rs. 50000/- as immediate relief for the death. The lost lives should be compensated.
- The chief minister's announcement of Rs.5000 per acre for crop loss is highly inadequate as the average expenditure exceeds RS. 26,000.So this amount needs to be revised.
- The wife of the deceased farmer/ women head of the family should be given 2 acres of Land with irrigation support and necessary agricultural inputs.
- All women farmers should be given compensation for crop failure irrespective of their land ownership status (including informal lease holders, farmers in common lands, etc).
- The daughter/son/wife of the deceased should be given Government Job according to their educational status.
- The old age dependants and disabled family members of the deceased should be provided with government assistance for survival.
- War time action has to be taken to remove encroachments on water bodies.
- The lost livestocks (cattles) should be provided with support for reparation and families to be provided with support for taking care of livestocks
- The pending payment for NREGA work should released immediately for all wage workers

### **Long term relief and compensation**

- Women farmers should be recognised as Farmers and Registration as a Farmer at the revenue village level and identity card to be provided to access entitlements.

- Excavate and deepen all water resources such as Ponds, Canals, Lakes, River basins.
- A tripartite committee to be formed with farmer, agriculture officer, representative from farmers movements with equal representation for women for improving the water bodies and provision of irrigation services for the most marginalised.
- Rain water preservation system to be created to prevent future damage to agriculture and wastage of water.
- Moratorium on Sand Mining in all water bodies and necessary steps to be taken to improve the ground water table.
- Ban to be introduced for Liquor companies and private Aqua Farms in the affected agricultural region.
- Special attention to be given for the Nagapattinam and Thiruvarur Districts to prevent the sea water intrusion and Salinization of ground water.
- Water mapping system to be created at the panchayat level to check the ground water and salinization level and protection of wetland including mangrove forests and paddy fields to be carried out.
- People's participation, particularly women farmers participation at the panchayat level to be evolved and implemented for protecting water bodies and improving water conditions.
- Immediate enforcement of Supreme Court Judgment on Cavery water sharing to be ensured.
- Prevent misuse of free electricity by larger companies and private interests.
- Immediate safeguards to be created to protect farmers and farming lands from the impact of global warming and climate change conditions.
- The technology of weather forecast for farming sector needs to be introduced and farmers should be informed about monsoon predictions at taluk level.

-Water sucking plants eucalyptus and karuvelam should be removed immediately to protect the water table.

-Organic farming methods –traditional seed protection, organic pest control, organic manure preparation, Vermiculture and traditional irrigation methods should be promoted.

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