

**An Expedition to Safeguard the  
Rights of the Coastal Communities**

**Annual Report 2013**

**SNEHA**

## **1. Introduction:**

SNEHA (Social Need Education and Human Awareness) is a Non-Profit Organisations registered in India under Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act of 1975.

SNEHA strives to work towards “A just society that is free of caste, class, religion, gender, language and age based discrimination through social transformation with peoples’ participation and participatory, consultative, transparent and inclusive system of governance, which ensures the protection and promotion of environment and sustainable development”

With a mission, to facilitate self-mobilization of marginalized workers in fisheries and allied fisheries of the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, SNEHA reaches out to 51 villages and hamlets in Karaikal and Nagapattinam Districts.

*SNEHA's Outreach:*

- Intensive Field Activities across 51 Villages in Karaikal and Nagapattinam Districts
- Advocacy, Lobbying and Networking across Tamil Nadu and Puducherry
- Strengthening Perspective of other NGOs in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry

## **2. The Issues SNEHA seeks to address:**

Fishing is a way of life and not just a source of income for the fishing communities. Initially, the small scale and artisan fishers have provided fishes exclusively for local consumption but now with its entry into global market and fish becoming scarce, it is increasingly becoming unaffordable to the local market.

In the globalization process the fishing communities are now displaced because of the emergence of various destructive development projects across the coast. MNCs involvement in massive mechanized fishing has resulted in depletion of fish resources thereby depriving the fishing communities of their traditional livelihoods. The situation is further intensified by importing of subsidized fish from other areas that has sounded a death knell to the existing small-scale and cottage fish industries. With the fish workers losing their right to decide the price of their produce invariably results in chronic loss of their livelihood and it is estimated that over 10 million fish workers will be affected across the country.

With women playing an integral role in the pre-harvest activities like mending of nets, mechanization of the same has had a deep impact on women’s economic empowerment. Likewise, women have also been involved in the various post-harvest activities that include marketing as well as processing of fish. With the trade becoming export-oriented, women are marginalized in the

marketing as the trend of retail marketing is increasingly replacing the wholesale business. As fish processing has also become industrialized women involved in the cottage industry of fish processing are forced to close down their units and work as “cheap labourers” in the various industries that violates the labour laws.

The women had been pushed to the margins because of the privatization of wetlands and inland waters whereby they have lost their access to the commons. Women are losing control over the means of production in the fisheries and her rights are reduced from that of an entrepreneur to that of a labourer. They are denied of “profits” but are offered “security nets” that makes life a constant battle. There is no safeguard against sexual harassment at work place and occupational hazards.

Further the impact of rampant tourism and emergence of anti-poor development policies related to fisheries and the commons is posing a threat to the very survival of these communities.

### 3. SNEHA's Interventions:

#### a. Ensuring Protection of Coastal Habitats and Environment by creating awareness among the communities about the impact of the Destructive Development Projects and the anti-poor policies related to the coast.

One of the key activities of SNEHA is to create rights outlook on the coastal resources and coastal lands by involving in various public actions and campaigns. The activities includes organizing training at various levels on the anti-poor policies; facilitate grass-root actions to challenge these draconian policies; organizing workshops and conventions with various civil society formations to strengthen the struggles of the people and finally to involve in large-scale campaigns to bring to the notice of the policy makers the view points of the communities. The key strength of SNEHA is to make use of the various democratic spaces like the gram sabha meetings as well as the public hearings to register the dissent of the communities.

- **Facilitating People's Action Demanding Protection of Coastal Commons:**

SNEHA has been launching several campaigns in the year 2013 in coordination with Coastal Action Network (CAN), Karaikal District Fisher Women Federation, Dalit and Farmer Movements, Consumer



Federation and the National Fish Workers Forum towards safeguarding the coastal environment and habitats. The campaigns were against the

Coal Based Thermal Power Plants, atrocities if Sri Lankan Navy on the Indian Tamil Fisher people and strengthening of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification. These campaigns have been instrumental in building perspectives among communities synergizing actions among various stakeholders to oppose these destructive development plans. 3459 individuals had actively participated in these campaign activities this year.



SNEHA has motivated the CBOs to meet the leaders of the different political parties and present their memorandum with demands to withdraw the CRZ notification 2011 and stalling of the coal based thermal power plants.

- ***Documentation and Dissemination of Information Related to Anti-Poor Policies and its Adverse Impact on the Communities:***

To challenge the various destructive development initiatives like that of the Coal Based Thermal Power Plants, SNEHA had collected the relevant documents including the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), Clearances Documents Issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forest and the Consent documents of the State Pollution Control Board. The Right to information Act, 2005, was used to collect some of these documents. The experts in the field critiqued the EIA and reports were generated based on the critiques. Based on the above, preliminary study reports were carried out in Nagapattinam District on the impact of the proposed thermal power plants. The findings of all these processes were disseminated to the communities who are to be affected and their objections through petitions were also documented.



In order to generate awareness on the procedures related to the Environment Clearances of the Thermal Power Plants and to generate awareness among the project affected communities, a national level seminar on the importance of Environment Impact

Assessment Notification and Procedures to Conduct Public Hearing was organized by CAN

CAN had organised a press meet with scientists and experts on Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project to disseminate information to the policy makers and the general public about the ill effects of the project. Expert opinions were provided during the press meet.

- ***Making use of Legal and Democratic Spaces:***

SNEHA has motivated the communities to take up Legal actions challenging the onslaught of the destructive development forces that seeks to ravage their lives. These cases are at different stages and one of the key outcome of the legal actions is the verdict issued by the National Green Tribunal to the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), Government of India to commission Cumulative Impact Assessment Study of all the proposed thermal power projects in the area within a period of one year from the date of judgment. CAN has also been involved in constant monitoring and submission of representation to the Secretary of the MoEF, Government of India regarding the same.

As a result of the constant participation in the public hearings organised by the government, initiation of legal action and legislative advocacy, support from scientists and scientific institutions, public actions and protests and the support from Media few projects have been temporarily stalled form the year 2009 onwards. The standards for conducting public hearing has been detailed in the order of the National Green Tribunal in the litigation filed by Representatives of the Fishing community from Nagapattinam District along with Coastal Action Network.

## **b. Building and Capacitating the Women's Federations**

***"When we initially approached, the Panchayat members were unwilling but after an interface meeting and continuous pressure from all the 19 Village Coordination Committee members, the Panchayat president gave us permission to conduct our federation meeting in Akkaraipettai centre."***  
***Shares Backyalakshmi, Federation Leader.***



SNHEA believes in enhancing the capacities of women by enabling them to understand their rights over the coastal resources and the coastal lands. Special emphasis is provided on spreading

awareness among the fisher women about their rights as women workers. The strategies include initiation of capacity building activities, strengthening of the women's collectives at the village and cluster level and linking the federations with other regional, state and national level forums

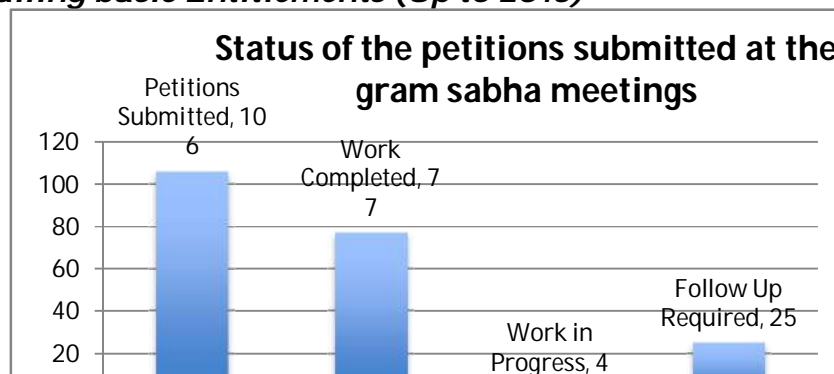
The work of SNEHA from its day of inception has resulted in formation of 460 sangams with a total of 6902 members. In the reporting year 2013 there were 364 sangam meetings held and 977 members had participated in these meetings. People's Market was the central theme of discussion in these meetings. The objective of the training is to make people understand how establishment of people's market could alleviate poverty in the villages. The women were encouraged not only to produce goods but also to buy products produced by the sangams. The producers and consumers were encouraged to work as partners in this market approach. In the year 2014 the village coordination sangams (VCS) have had 55 meetings where 138 women had participated. At the cluster level 7 federation meetings were conducted in which 450 women leaders had participated. The main agenda of the meeting was on enhancing the participation of women in local governance mechanism, combating violence against women at the community level and means to avail basic entitlements.

- **Enhancing participation of women in the local governance mechanism**

73% of the petitions, submitted in the gram sabha meetings, demanding for basic amenities work at the village level were completed. The petitions demanded for providing drinking water and drainage facilities, installation of hand pumps and street lights, setting up of anganwadis and primary health centres, construction of common toilets, repair of roads and cyclone shelters and adequate transportation.



- **Availing basic Entitlements (Up to 2013)**



- 1641 men and 2971 women have availed the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension
- 288 men and 169 women have availed the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension
- 998 women have availed the Indira Gandhi Widow Pension
- 1 woman have availed the Destitute Differently Abled Pension
- 31 women have availed Destitute Widows Pension
- 48 women have availed Destitute, Deserted Wives Pension
- 8 women have availed Pension for Unmarried Poor
- 245 women availed marriage assistance

- ***Combating Violence Against Women (VAW)***

In the year 2014, SNEHA has had a special focus on addressing violence against women. As part of observing the Women's Day it was decided that women would form a village level committee to monitor and combat VAW. SNEHA has facilitated formation of steering committee on VAW in 33 villages with 159 members.



As part of the 16 days of activism on VAW the women had planned to focus on sexual harassment. Over 200 women from 4 NGO and 2 CBO had participated in the campaign. The members of the traditional village panchayats were contacted and they vouched to extend their support towards this cause. 19 Traditional Panchayats suggested forming Village Level Monitoring Committees.

SNEHA had taken up 3 cases of Domestic Violence and 1 on Sexual Abuse in the year 2014. All the four cases have been resolved favourable to the victim. The activities of the sangam have resulted in closing down of a liquor shop that had posed a nuisance for the women in the vicinity. The issue of declining child sex ratio was discussed in all villages. 10 Village panchayats passed resolutions vouching to stop sex selection and abortion through scan centres and uphold the rights of girl children

**c. Retaining and Gaining Greater Access to Primary Livelihoods**

***Soap making keeps me occupied and also the earning support my living, says Kokila. "I am a single woman having a daughter Abinaya studying in 1<sup>st</sup> standards and a son Haris studying in UKG. We live in Karaikalmedu village. Before, my daily activities were restricted to my house but after the death of my husband our future looked bleak to me. But with SNEHA's support I started receiving monthly pension and they also trained me in soap making to enable me earn a living. The monthly***

*pension amount of Rs.1000/- and earnings through soap making helps me lead peaceful life. It not only keeps me occupied but has built my confidence to bring up my children with dignity.*



One of the unique interventions of SNEHA is the initiation of the Samuthra India Producer Company Ltd., which was set up towards ensuring economic empowerment of women in fisheries and allied fisheries. This community-owned initiative is launched with an objective to strengthen the primary livelihood options for the women. This initiative also seeks to strengthen the food security at the local level and to ensure access and control for the women fish workers in the local market. The recent activities of Samuthra include that of float production, transportation facilities, vending vessels, flourmills, soap production, dry fish marketing, tea marketing, packaging and marketing chili powder.

- Of the 479 SHGs 215 are audited
- Total Savings of the groups: Rs. 3,86,71,127 /-
- Internal Loan Outstanding: Rs. 3,33,73,185
- Bank Balance: Rs. 1,03,59,831.46
- Cash in hand: 15,48,613
- Total members having insurance in the year 2013: 4506 members and 2287 spouse

<b>2005-14 Insurance Policy</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Spouse</b>
2005-06	7298	0
2006-07	7298	0
2007-08	10672	0
2008-09	9574	0
2009-10	7574	649
2010-11	6648	1196
2011-12	6849	1725
2012-13	5379	2512
2013-14	4506	2287
<b>Total</b>	<b>65798</b>	<b>8369</b>

- Total insurance claims in the year 2013: 31 (12 of members and 19 of spouse)
- Total members benefitting from scholarship: 1156



Year	No. of Beneficiaries	Amount
2006-09	4603	5523600
2009-10	1324	1588800
2010-11	1107/995	1261200
2011-12	1422/1112	1520400
2012-13	1267/1192	1475400
2013-14	1156	693600
<b>Total</b>		<b>12063000</b>

<b>Total LIC Benefits (2005-2014)</b>	
Total benefit for community from LIC (170 Death claims *30000 approximate)	51,00,000
Scholarship (2006 to 2014)	1,20,63,000
Amount Paid for Premium from 2005-2014	1,07,06,600
<b>Net Benefit</b>	<b>64,56,400</b>

### Activities of Samuthra



Soap Production



Making Disinfectants



#### d. Protection and Promotion of rights of children and adolescents

***“T. Amiritha is studying Std IX in Government High School at Vanagiri. She has a younger brother. Her father is a fishing labourer and her mother is a house wife. Her ability to learn has improved step by step. She is very eager to draw pictures. She draws and colours beautiful pictures. She has got many prizes in drawing competitions. She has got many prizes also in Elocution competitions. She not only studies General Knowledge Questions but also prepares General Knowledge Questions and conducts Quiz programmes. After participating in the programme in another village, she taught an awareness song about health and hygiene to other children in the children’s panchayat meeting” says Sathyavani, the teacher.***

***“She is a future leader. When she comes to the Children’s panchayat meeting, she will also bring other members with her she will explain to the members the services done by the children’s panchayat. She comes forward to preside over the meeting. When Dengue fever spread in the village she joined the VHN and they prepared many slogans to create Awareness in the village about Dengue. When the procession was conducted, she went forward catching the banner and showing slogans. As her voice was loud and clear, the villagers understood what was said and congratulated her for it. As she is a member in the girls’ rights committee, she is always eager to identify the problems of female children. She has spoken in the meeting about 2 girls who dropped out of school and has lot of efforts to get them readmitted in school. She is a role model for other children in studies” adds Kowsalya, her friend.***

SNEHA is working towards strengthening the children panchayats at various levels and monitoring child rights violations by strengthening the child protection committees at the village level. Focus is given for educating the children about their rights and entitlements. SNEHA also involves in networking of children across village, cluster and district level and also engages in advocacy to ensure free, equal and quality education.



capacities to teach these children.

168 boys and 164 girls from the age group of 3-5 years are benefitting from the pre-schools run by SNEHA. The children are introduced to activity based learning so that they will be able to cope up when they are enrolled in primary schools. The education system adopted ensures holistic development of the children. There have been 13 trainings organised for the teachers to enhance their

Another important activity undertaken by SNEHA is to provide awareness among the parents on rights of children. This is to ensure that parents understand the importance of education and refrain from practicing child marriages. In the year 2013, 69 meetings were conducted and total of 1228 parents have participated in the same. One key agenda of these meetings is also to sensitize people about the school monitoring committees (schools) and the mothers committees (anganwadis) and motivate the parents to participate in these processes.

The experiences of SNEHA with the communities reveal that the children find it difficult to cope up with the curriculum and they need support for the same. Hence evening centres are set up for 230 girls and 212 boys. Priority is given for the drop out children and those who are in the brinks of dropping out from their classes. The children have shown considerable development in their education as well as their extracurricular activities because of these evening tuition centres. In the year 2013, 16 drop out children have been enrolled in schools.



One of the key objectives of SNEHA is to educate children about their basic rights and enhance their capacities to assert for their rights. At present there are 54 children groups consisting of 1101 boys and 1092 girls as members. In the year 2013, 205 meetings were conducted in which 2904 boys and 3023 girls had participated in the same. Children are given

awareness on the importance of education, Right to Education Act, Right to Information Act, Gram Sabha Meetings and that of child line. Capacity enhancement training programmes were conducted both at the cluster as well as the district level. In the year 2013, 6 cluster level meetings were conducted benefitting 114 boys and 107 girls. To capacitate leadership among children district level meeting was conducted for 21 boys and 35 girl children leaders. As a result of such trainings the children panchayat has been strengthened.

SNEHA has also played a crucial role towards ensuring the rights of the girl children by its active participation in CASSA (Campaign Against Sex Selective Abortion). 1391 children have been administered polio drops by linking with the Health Department. Health camps were also conducted for the children where in 67 boys and 49 girls had benefited out of these camps.

SNEHA is also managing a child sponsorship project where in 743 children are being provided indirect support (Support for the community development activities that will also benefit the children). 226 of the children under the sponsorship project were provided training on enhancing their drawing skills.



In order to enhance the capacities of the youngsters SNEHA has mobilized 21 adolescent groups of which 20 are for young girls and 1 for young boys. This year 68 meetings were conducted whereby 831 young girls and 10 young boys were provided awareness on various issues concerning their health and education.

- ***Reaching out to children living in distress situation through the Child Helpline Initiative***

Sneha is implementing the Childline in Karaikal as a collaborative organization. Childline (1098) is a national 24-hour free phone emergency outreach service for children in need of care and protection and aims to link children to long-term services. Through this intervention SNEHA seeks to protect and promote the rights of children up to the age of 18 by linking with the various government department since 12, April 2012.

There was an awareness drive initiated to create awareness about Childline to children and adults across slums and villages across Karaikal District. 9 public awareness programmes were organised that had reached across 1630 people. 4435 children across 32 schools were also provided awareness about the helpline. 65 awareness programmes were organised for SHGs that reached out to 953 women. 10 open house programme were conducted and 623 children have participated in the programmes. Apart from this, special awareness programmes were conducted for students and the general public covering 793 individuals.

- SNEHA has addressed 149 cases in the year 2013
- 10 child marriage issues were brought to the notice of the Childline, of which 7 marriages were stopped through District Administration and 3 by the Childline team
- 20 drop out children were identified, of which 17 children are now going to school
- 3 children are in the process of enrolment
- 7 children have been referred to the children home
- 4 children have been referred for various treatments

- 8 children have been rescued from begging
- 13 child sexual abuse cases and 1 physical abuse case have been addressed
- 9 children were reintegrated with their families
- 53 children provided with emotional support and guidance
- 17 children have benefited out of referral service
- 5 missing children have been traced
- 7 children have been rescued from various distress situations
- 29 children were produced to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC)

Some of the key achievements of the year 2013 includes the following

- The Childline Advisory Board (CAB) was formed and 3 meetings were conducted at the District Collectorate
- The District Collector formed an enquiry committee for dealing with child abuse cases
- Workshop was organized for police officials on the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act, 2012
- Child begging in Karaikal reduced by 95%



SNEHA being part of the Childline Advisory Board (that also includes representation from the various government departments) is playing a crucial role in ensuring the rights of the children.

#### **e. Water and Sanitation Initiatives**

The intervention of SNEHA for the last few years in the community has resulted in effective community-centric solid waste management system in the communities. The Karaikal Municipality has acknowledged the work of SNEHA and has joined hands with the organisation for launching the community-based solid waste management programme. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed as a sign of collaboration. This is the first step towards making the government understand the importance of Community-Centric WASH Initiative.

**SNEHA is striving towards asserting the customary rights of the fishers to the sea and the coast. There are many challenges in the process yet the journey towards envisioning the rights has begun and it will continue. We seek your wishes and support to enable us to continue our mission.**

**For further information kindly contact us:**

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