

PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION FOR PEOPLE'S EDUCATION (POPE)

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



**No,274 Bharath Nagar 8th street, Shanmugavel Nagar, kadachanendal,
Madurai 625107, Tamilnadu,**

Message from the Executive Director,

It is my immense pleasure to report that the work did in 2020-2021 helped us to effectively respond and assisted the survivors of caste atrocities for increasingly access to justice in 7 districts of Tamil Nadu, enhanced socio and mental wellbeing of Children through creative art learning during the COVID19 pandemic lockdown in 2 districts of Tamil Nadu through team of young committed staff, volunteers, professionals, civil society networks, donors. We have effectively addressed 14 incidents of caste atrocities and accompanied the survivors to access justice and their economic entitlements.



We have proactively engaged and work towards promoting leadership among children of socially excluded communities by facilitating creative learning through Children Resource Centre (CRC) in 7 villages of Thanjavur and Madurai reached 150 children directly. CRC is one of the nerve activities of our intervention for ensuring social inclusion of Dalit and Adivasi children in the educational institutions by breaking prejudices and stigma based on their birth identity. We adopted Art and Media as an intentional and influential strategy to explore the children inherent creative skills and their creative agency for bringing self-liberation, building self-confidence, leadership and wholesome education development of the children.

Art and Media strategy has been significantly contributed to bring their stories, building counter narratives to break distorted narratives and mainstreaming their dignified narratives of their lives. For eg: Art and Media strategy in CRC activities has enabled space for social dialogue among children of different backgrounds and achieved plural participation. The non-Dalit neighboring children never ever neither played with Dalit children nor entered the Dalit village where the Art workshop was break this wall and attracted the non-Dalit children to make an entry to the Dalit village and enabled a space for dialogue with the Dalit children. It was a classic example and impact of the creative Art tool for bringing social inclusion and recognizing pluralism among the children at Manojpatty village of Thanjavur.

Access to Justice Initiative was effectively intervened and addressed the incidents of caste atrocities and deeply consoled and accompanied with the survivors of caste atrocities for increasingly access to justice. The timely interventions and meticulous follow up of the cases resulted in appropriate actions from the concerned authorities, access to remedy from the criminal justice system and human rights redressal institutions.

As part of our commitment to end caste based discrimination, inequality, injustice POPE has developed an exclusive approach to prevent commission of caste atrocities and ensure effective implementation of The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes {Prevention of Atrocities} Amendment Act 2015 by systematic interventions and meticulous follow up of cases by accompanying the national and international human rights mechanisms. The key learning that will help us to intensify our interventions by evolving escalative strategies to achieve the results and multiply the impacts in it interventions for the advancement lives of Dalit and Adivasi communities.

It is my great pleasure to express my sincere gratitude to the staff, volunteers, professionals, civil society coalitions, community, board members and our donors for their mammoth support and deepest solidarity in all our interventions to achieve these results and impact.

In Solidarity,

I.Pandiyan

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INTRODUCING POPE

People's Organisation for People Education (POPE) is a registered, voluntary, secular, non-profit organization established in the year 1992, is aiming at to Create a Just Society with Equality and Dignity of Every Person. POPE strives to achieve this objective by Educating, Enabling Opportunities, Strengthening Access to Justice System and bringing socio & economic sustainable changes in the lives of Dalit, Adivasi and other marginalized communities in the state of Tamil Nadu.

POPE is committed to strengthen the Access to Justice System for increasingly access to justice for the Dalits, Adivasis and other most Margilasied communities in the state of Tamil Nadu through engaging in Dalit Human Rights Monitoring, Adjudication, Engagement with the State and National Human Rights Redressal Institutions, Campaign and Publication.

WHERE WE WORK

POPE is primarily working in 7 districts namely Madurai, Dindigul, Theni, Sivagangai, Virudhunagar, Tanjore, Nagapattinam in the state of Tamil Nadu and networking with the State, National and International Campaigns and Coalitions.

OUR VISION

Create a Just Society with Equality and Dignity of Every Person.

OUR MISSION

Protect and promote the fundamental rights of Dalits, Adivasis and other most Marginalised communities through Quality Education, Accessing Economic Entitlements and Justice.

MAJOR THRUST AREAS OF POPE

- **Witness for justice-** a program unit of POPE is aiming at to strengthen Access to Justice System for the Dalits, Adivasis and other Marginalized Communities
- **ACCESS TO JUSTICE :**
 - **Human Rights Monitoring:** to bring out the facts of alleged human rights violations committed against Dalits, Women, Children, Adivasis and other weaker sections of the society.
 - **Fact finding Missions-** Fact-finding missions are carried out immediately after the incident of caste atrocity, human rights violation and other forms of abuses occurred or reported
 - **Legal Intervention -** The survivors of caste atrocities and human rights violations are gained legal support through the committed lawyers to access to justice
 - **Legal Clinics-** Legal clinics is one of the unique strategies and enabled a space to mobilize the survivors of caste atrocities, witnesses, sympathizers, advocates in one platform and bridging relationship to gain continuous support to access to criminal justice administrative system.
- **Social Inclusion and children education** through Art & Media
- **Children Centre for Change (CCC)** - CCC is enabling space to the children with their best interest to play, think, invent, learn and perform towards achieving their development. CCC provides opportunities and facilitates the children to enhance their knowledge, Creativity, Skills, Leadership, Values and perspective.
- **Dalit Leadership and Economic Entitlements-** Promoting the Dalit Women Leadership through series of capacity building programs, exposure, networking to increasingly access to their entitlements
- **.Social Inclusive Humanitarian Response-** POPE has been engaging in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM), Humanitarian Response with Social

Inclusive Frame Work to ensure the Humanitarian Response with Equality and Human Dignity.

POPE POLICIES

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

POPE from its inception has adopted a rights-based approach in addressing vulnerability, exploitation and abuse of children. The child protection policy of POPE has not only a resonance to its vision and mission but also an evolution in response to the changing socio-economic and legal climate. POPE has adopted this Child Protection Policy (CPP) to make itself thoroughly accountable as an organization working with children. It



obliges its members and representatives to commit to a highly responsible conduct towards children they work with, and ensure their freedom, rights, safety and dignity. It defines the conduct and actions that constitute child abuse, the complaint mechanism

and redressal.

POPE has a detailed Child Protection Policy (CPP) a code of conduct and ethics evolved and duly signed by individual staff members as personal ethics on joining the organization as well projects. This is maintained in the individual personal career file of the individual staff. There is a designated Child Protection Officer who is responsible to deal with issues of complaints that come from the child reporting mechanism which is in place not only with organization but also with communities.

FINANCE POLICY

The purpose of the financial policy is to describe and document how the board wants the financial management activities to be carried out. In order to accomplish this, every financial policy needs to address five areas:

1. Assignment of authority for necessary and regular financial accounts and decisions, which may include delegation of some authority to staff leaders
2. Policy statement on conflicts of interest, or inside transactions
3. Clear authority to spend funds including approval, cheque signing, and payroll
4. Clear assignment of authority to enter into contracts
5. Clear responsibility for maintaining accurate financial records

KEY INTERVENTIONS AND ITS IMPACT

ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGY THROUGH ART AND MEDIA

“Kuravar” community is one of the sub-castes of Scheduled Castes known as Dalits in the state of Tamil Nadu, in India subjected to various forms of brutal torture by the police and violent form of social exclusions. The Kuravar Children are potential victims of police torture, criminalization and social exclusion based on their birth identity and social stigma. They have been experienced multiple forms of oppression and ignorance due to brutal police atrocity and birth identity. The innocent children and young people are targeted by the police as future criminals due to their birth identity and social stigma.



The Children had been undergone traumatized experiences by forceful visits to the police station which severely wounded their inner psyche. Many of the children got dropped out from school due to arrest, overextended imprisonment of their parent, disability by police torture and etc. The Children do not have memorable childhood experiences due to extended incarceration of their parents by the police.

For the first time, Witness for Justice has focusing on the children of police torture of Kuravara Community which falls under Scheduled Caste Category by using Alternative pedagogy as a tool. It is an important tool for bringing out the inherent talents of children through the medium of Art & Media.

The alternative pedagogy through art leads children to self-directive, self-thinking, discovering their creative potentials, bringing transformation within self and outside through their creative productions. We strongly believe in young children will bring social transformation. Art and Media plays an important role which helps in self- liberalization. Arts brings a form of truth to learning enrich curriculum while bringing joys to children.

FORMATION OF CRC

Children Resource Centre is one of the unique programs of POPE. CRC is functioning in the evening hours after the school where the children are enjoying their rights through play and learning. This Centre formed especially for the children between the age group of 8 years to 18

years. We have established 7 Children Resource Centres (CRC Centres) in 2 districts namely Tanjore and Madurai.

This is the greatest platform for the children to improve their talents, develops knowledge, self-esteem and leadership qualities. Since, the children from the Kuravar community had never come together and they did not have care and support because the parents have spent more of their years in prisons and police stations. It had also resulted in school dropouts and they could not compete with the other children.

POPE in collaboration with CEDAR provides training on Art and crafts and photography skills to the children to enhance their creative capacities and motivates innovations to realize their full potentials. The centre has CRC facilitators through which the children are mentored in all course of their learning. After, attending CRC, the level of interest among students increased.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Access to Justice for all is an important human right. In the absence of access to justice, people are unable to have their voices heard, exercise their rights. Kuravar community is one of the sub-castes of Scheduled Castes known as Dalits in the state of Tamil Nadu, in India. The communities have been targeted for arbitrary arrest and illegal detention, brutal forms of torture by the police and foisted false theft charges against women, children and men who belongs to these communities in the state of Tamil Nadu. They are denied of access to justice. Witness for Justice, involves in monitoring Human rights violation issues, conducting fact finding in the case of police torture, caste discrimination, community clash, sexual assault and murder against dalits to seek remedy and relief for the injustice by intervening legally. Witness for Justice focus on the following areas to access for justice.

1. Monitoring Human Rights Violation
2. Fact Finding Missions
3. Filing RTI
4. Legal Intervention

Monitoring Human Rights Violation

The main core activity of Witness for Justice is monitoring human rights violation issues happened in and around the region. The goal of monitoring is engaging in advocacy to address human rights violations. It also involves a process of documenting human rights violations and practices so that the information can be categorized, verified, and used effectively. Witness for Justice has sent a representation to the Human Rights Institution to address the issues received on the month via online/ News etc.,

Fact Finding Missions

Fact finding is a process of drawing conclusions of fact from monitoring activities. It entails a great deal of information gathering in order to establish and verify the facts surrounding an alleged human rights violation. Witness for Justice is undertaking fact-finding missions in the cases of police torture, encounter death, custodial death, caste atrocities, violence against women, corporal punishment and violence against dalits and children. The cases have been

thoroughly followed up and accompanied the survivors to gain interim compensation and justice as part of legal intervention.

Right to Information

The practice of Untouchability is an offence and anyone doing so is punishable by law. Despite the untouchability is prevails everywhere in India. WITNESS for Justice undertook a study on Untouchability and through RTI and found 502 villages where practiced untouchability from the data obtained from the Law Enforcement Department and another RTI had filed to obtain the data of Non-Untouchability villages where the state government has been giving award to those villages. The purpose of the study is to bring the state accountability to abolish Untouchability and effective implementation of the SC/ST PoA Act 2018 and ensure the prevention of atrocities. The report is yet to release and the material will be used as an advocacy material and filing a PIL.

Witness for Justice, has been progressively applying Right to Information (RTI) as an important tactic to collect information from Government Sources. So far, we have sent 20 RTI's on different topics such as untouchability practicing village, violence-prone area, rape and murder of Dalit women etc., after obtaining the data from the respective authority, the data will be compiled and made into a consolidated report. Witness for Justice will file a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) for accomplishing remedy if necessary.

LEGAL INTERVENTION

Witness for Justice involves in protecting and promoting the rights of Kuravar Community by responding to the incidents of police atrocity and caste atrocity. Witness for Justice provides legal support to the survivors to access to justice.

Highlights of access to Justice are follows.

- About 13 survivors of caste atrocity and police torture had received legal assistance from Witness for Justice.
- Two Writ of Mandamus petition filed before Madras High Court for not to harass the family of Kuravar Community to render justice.
- 10 petitions filed before High Court of Madras for seeking justice through better access of Criminal Justice System.

INTERVENTION OF POPE IN IMPORTANT CASES

CASE 1: CONTINUOUS THREATS OF FILING FALSE CASES, TORTURE AND INSECURITY AGAINST AN 18 YEAR OLD DALIT BOY & FAMILY BY THE CUDDALORE AND KALLAKURICHI JURISDICTION POLICE

Mr. Ayyasamy is residing with his family in Kallakurichi District. They were running a small scale business for their livelihood and own a house in Chennai. In 2002, Ayyasamy was arrested by the Selaiyur police on false theft case. Thus he spent four months in central prison for a false accusation. Within three days the police had filed another theft case against him and kept in lockup after let out of the previous case. Starting from the year of 2002 to 2017 the Police of Chennai, Villupuram, Kallakurichi, Thiruvannamali, Kadalur and Vellore districts have registered accusations against him and harassed since because he belong to the scheduled caste of Kuravar community. Thus wasted most of his lifetime spending in jail and caused severe mental frustration economic loss to his family and children were very much affected. They suffered mental stress during childhood and unable to pursue their studies in a proper manner.

In 2020, the Cuddalore and Kallakurichi district jurisdictional police have been terrorizing, threatening and continuously harassing, torturing his family. They were intimidating by the police that they will file false case against him and his 18 years older son who has passed out higher secondary school and applied for B.Tech engineering education in Ganamani Engineering College. In this circumstance, the police arrested Ayyasamy and three of his relatives and kept in jail. In this situation, they also put up a case against his son namely Prakash and his wife Palaniyammal. His family has been living under terrible fear of police due to their continuous police torture.

In this context, Witness for Justice has tremendously working to safeguard of the life of the 18 year old and continue to pursue his studies without any trouble. Witness for Justice has been filed bail petition for Palaniyammal and Prakash and Anticipatory bail petition for Mr. Ayyasamy and his relatives before the High court of Madras. This case is under follow up.

CASE 2: CASTE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST A DALIT EMPLOYEE BY HIS SUPERIOR AT GOVERNMENT OFFICE

Mr. Velmurugan S/O Surulivel is living with his family in K.Pudhupatti of Uthamapalayam Block, Theni District. He belongs to the Hindu Kuruvan Community of Scheduled Caste. He has been working as a Pump Operator in Hanumantham town Panchayat for about 23 years.

He has been verbally abused by his Executive Officer Mr. Radhakrishnan belongs to Upper Caste Community in filthy and derogatory language by referring to his caste name in front of other staffs. Velmurugan was also threatened by the executive officer that he will be taken off from the job. He given complaint against the executive officer at Uthamapalayam Police Station but the police did not file a FIR.

In this context, he approached Witness for Justice. On behalf of the victim, we have sent a complaint for seeking to file FIR under SC/ST PoA Act. The police filed only with section of IPC, then again WITNESS for Justice intervened challenged the negligence of police by sending legal notice to initiate criminal proceedings against police under Sec 4 of SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 2015. After continuous effort of Witness for Justice, for more than 45 days, the police included sec 3(1) (r) of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and 506(1) of the Indian Penal Code in the FIR.

For more than 70 days after filing FIR with appropriate sections, no legal/ departmental action has been taken against Mr Radhakrishnan since he is an executive officer. Witness for Justice is accompanying with the victim and in the process of filing a petition in the Court. We are constantly working to get justice for the victim.

CASE 3: CASTE ATROCITIES AGAINST A DALIT FAMILY IN PILLIKALPALAYAM OF NAMAKKAL DISTRICT

A family that belongs to Hindu Kuravan community lives in Pillikalpalayam village of Namakkal District. This family has constructed a house in the Pillikalpalayam where upper caste people lives highly. Since they start building the house, they were slandering by Mrs. Shanthi who belongs to Vanniyar community.

Mrs. Santhi threatened Mrs Gomathy to vacate her own house and failing to do so she would file false complaints against her and family so as to deploy her from the government job. Unable to tolerate this, she reported the incident to the Jadarpalayam police on the same day. But they refused to take her complaint.

In this situation, on 26-12-2020 at around 02.00 pm, Mrs. Santhi and her relatives had come to their house. They were verbally abused by referring their caste in filthy language and brutally beaten her, son and her daughter using stones and sticks. Due to their brutal attack they got injured severely and immediately rushed to Nallakondapalayam Government hospital for first aid. The police enquired about the incident and filed a FIR against Mrs. Shanthi and her relatives. For the past two years the neighbors belonging to vanniyaar community had been harassing her family by their disgraceful acts, derogatory remarks mentioning their caste.

In this context, Witness for Justice sent a complaint to all the concerned state authorities for the protection of victims under Sec 15 A of SC/ST PoA Act, 2015 and to initiate legal action against the perpetrators. With the continuous effort of Witness for Justice, Subramnaiyan's family has obtained the interim compensation of Rupees 1 Lakh from the State Government.



CASE 4: A DALIT MAN WAS HANGING AFTER BRUTAL TORTURE OF POLICE IN TANJORE

Mani belongs to Hindu Kuravar Community which falls under Scheduled Caste Category. He was working as Coolie labourer in Tanjore. He has two sons namely Surya and Ranjit. Surya has

been working as a Mason and Ranjith has been running a small evening noodles shop at Thanjavur. Frequent visit of police personnel's from Vallam Police Station and Tanjore Medical College Police Station enquired about Mani under the instruction of Mr. Sitaraman who is a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Vallam Police Jurisdiction, Tanjore.

On 22.05.2020, the Tanjore Tamil University Police arrested his son Ranjith without even stating the reason for arrest or without even issuing arrest memo and was brutally tortured in the police custody for few days and later remanded by the police by filing a false theft case against him and imprisoned.

On 10.06.2020 again around 07.00 A.M. more than 10 police personnel from Tamil University Police Station came to his house and enquired about Mani and learned that he is in his relative's house. The police team has immediately rushed to Mani's relative home and beating all of them indiscriminately with police lathi and wooden logs. After sustaining this brutal attack of police and Mani ran away from the spot. At around 01.40 P.M, they found Mani hanging in a tree with his lungi (Coloured Thoti) in Peivari River bed which is 1 ½ of Km away from his relatives house. The police have filed suspicious death under Sec 174 of IPC.

In this context, Witness for Justice has sent complaint to National Human Rights Commission and filed writ petition before the High Court to issue a direction to transfer the investigation to the CBI office for conducting fair and impartial investigation in Crime No.300 of 2020. We also sent a petition to District Collector for seeking compensation under Sec 357 of CrPC. This case is under follow up.



COVID-19 RELIEF MATERIAL

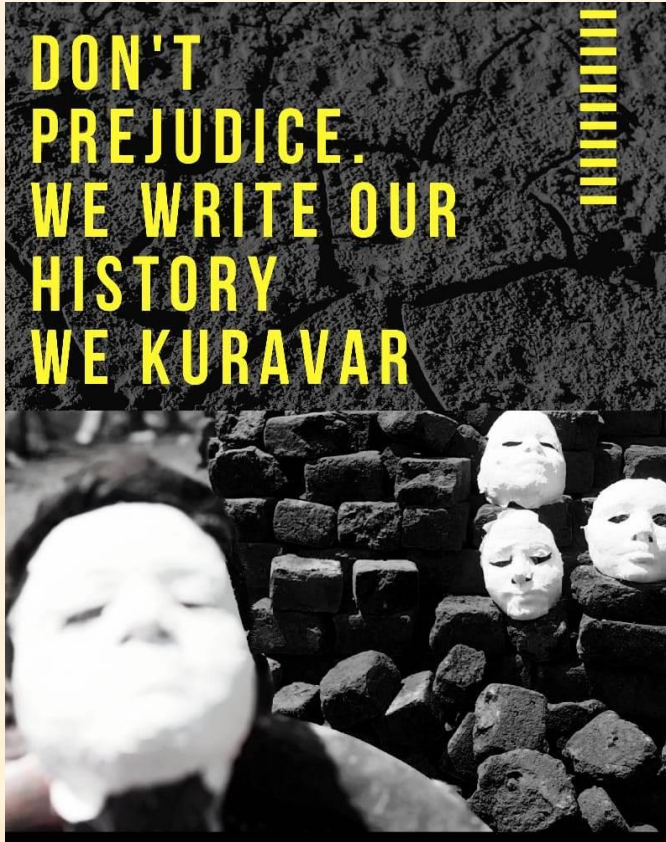
COVID-19 has rapidly affected our day to day life, businesses, disrupted the world trade and movements. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating and millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty. Most of the families in the Dalit community was notified as Untouchables and most of them are daily labourer and engaging in menial jobs. These people are targeted for brutal forms of caste atrocity, exclusion in accessing any of relief materiel in Pandemic situation.

They lives in remote villages and completely isolated and ignored even in the non-pandemic situation and this systematic exclusions is further pushed them into greater vulnerability and denial of access to their basic needs in the pandemic situation. People struggle hard to meet their family needs, especially the needs of children, and take heavy external loans from money lenders for abnormal interest.

Based on the need that identified by the team, Witness for Justice, had supported 100 families of The Puthirai Vannar (Washers) community is engaging in washing clothes with food relief kit covers 10 kg of Rice, I Kg of Dal, ½ kg of Masala, Ikg of Cooking Oil, I Kg of Sugar, Ikg of Salt, 2 Bath Soap, 5 Pockets of Biscuits.

Distribution of COVID-19 Relief Material





PUBLICATION DOCUMENTARY FILM ON UNTOLD TRUTHS OF KURUVARS

The Kuravar community was notified as “Ex Criminals” in free India. But, still they have been targeted for false charges by the police due to their birth identity, stigma and stereotyping criminalization. This stereotyping criminalization violates their fundamental rights including Right to Life, Liberty, Equality and Dignity. The younger generation is targeted and branding them as Criminals through this constructed antecedent by the police. Majority of the people have strong prejudice against Kuravar community that degrades their life and dignity.

It is very much important to bring counter narrative to educate younger generation of

this community and also create larger public opinion about the untold truths of this community.

Therefore, Witness for Justice realizes the importance of video document their real life stories from their collective memories with historical evidences. Witness for Justice is formulating in the process of making a documentary film on Real life stories of Kuravars.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

S.No	Name of the Staff	Name of the Training
1	Adv. Pandian	Presented a paper on Situation Of Dalits in India, conducted by US embassy
2	Adv. Pandian	Webinar on SC/ST POA, organized by Alagappa University of Karaikudi
3	Adv. Pandian	Webinar on SC/ST POA, Ambedkar Study Circle,
4	Adv. Pandian	Online Workshop on situation of Human Rights Defenders in India for the members of DHRD in Maharashtra.
5	Adv. Pandian	International Seminar On Prosperity and Social Justice.

LIST OF STAFF MEMBERS DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH POPE

The details of the present project team is given below

S.No	Name of the staff	Designation	Place
1.	Mr. Adv. Pandian	Executive Director	Madurai
2.	Ms Adv..Kumutha	Human Rights Educator	Madurai
3.	Mr.Karthick	Human Rights Educator	Madurai
4.	Ms. Sivaneswari	Finance Manager	Madurai
5.	Ms. Thatchayini	Creative Art Educator	Madurai
6.	Mrs. Prema	Associate Human Rights Educator	Madurai
7.	Ms. Aarthy	CRC Facilitators	Madurai
8.	Ms. Priya	CRC Facilitators	Madurai
9.	Ms. Prammasthav	CRC Facilitators	Tanjavur
10.	Ms. Durga Dharsini	CRC Facilitators	Tanjavur
11.	Ms. Hema	CRC Facilitators	Tanjavur
12.	Ms. Megala	CRC Facilitators	Tanjavur
13.	Ms. Sangeetha	CRC Facilitators	Tanjavur

FUTURE PLAN

- Capacitating Young Advocates, Human Rights Defenders and Women Advocates on SC/ST PoA Act to accompany with the survivors of caste atrocity and engage them as SPP for legal intervention, speedy trial, receiving compensation and thereby accessing the Criminal Justice System.
- Filing petitions under Right to Information to collect more information and will file a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to get justice for the society.
- Witness for Justice has been planned to work with the Kuravar community for their livelihood improvement, Health and Education of Children as part of holistic development of Kuravar community.
- Critical interventions with Judicial Department in an effective practice of SC/ST POA Act.
- last 31 years of the implementation of the SC/ST PoA Act, Many important provisions of SC/ST PoA Act, 2015 such as contingency plan, Sec 16 and others sections could not use effectively. Witness for Justice, will use all the sections meritoriously to get justice for the victims of marginalized.
- Witness for Justice will form a forum of Survivors and rehabilitation of Survivors forum by linking them with the existing skill training opportunities available with TAHDCO to access the justice and entitlements. It will enhance the capacity of the survivors and that will turn them to be very independent and self-drive.
- Initiating micro entrepreneurship program as an income generation activity among the Kuravar Community was notified as denotified tribes.
- Strengthening the inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Management Strategy in Nagapattinam.
- Replicating and Expanding the Alternative pedagogy model to bring counter narrative of this community to educate younger generation.