

**Mise en œuvre de stratégies d'actions villageoises motivées par le souci de développement durable par le biais de campagnes de sensibilisation et de formations participatives □ Palni Hills, Tamil Nadu, Inde**

**Objectif :**

Amélioration des conditions de vie des populations paysannes dalits par :

- une gestion réfléchie des ressources naturelles
- une implication accrue des femmes dans les projets de gestion environnementale
- une dynamique participative et d'éducation populaire

**Localisation :**

Région des Palni Hills, Tamil Nadu, Inde

**Promoteurs en Belgique :**

Alexandra de Heering et Stéphane Leyens, département « sciences, philosophies, sociétés »

**Promoteurs dans le Sud :**

- PEAK (People's Education and Action Kodaikanal), projet jésuite d'action sociale, Sacred Heart College, Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu.
- Rural Development Sciences Department, Arul Anandar College, Karumathur, Tamil Nadu.

**Financement :**

Fucid 100% (soit 20.000 euros)

**Durée :**

juin 2008 – juin 2012 (une année complémentaire a été sollicitée auprès de la FUCID)

**Résultats de la première phase du projet :**

La première phase du projet a consisté en une évaluation participative des besoins des populations dalits des villages cibles. À cette fin, une enquête empirique et des sessions de PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) ont été effectuées en 2009 (cfr rapport d'activité de l'année 2009).

Trois éléments sont ressortis de cette étude :

- La question de l'accès aux ressources naturelles n'est pas centrale dans les préoccupations des communautés intouchables de cette région.
- L'éducation est ressentie par les communautés intouchables comme un facteur décisif dans leur développement et leur émancipation.
- La nécessité d'unifier la communauté dalit et de renforcer leur représentativité politique et leur capacité de revendication est soulignée.

Sur cette base, il est décidé de se concentrer sur la sensibilisation aux droits des dalits et des adivasis (tribaux) et de développer leur capacité de militance et de revendication légale et politique.

À cette fin, nous décidons de mettre en œuvre les actions suivantes :

- Formation et performances d'une troupe de théâtre de rue qui participe aux festivals des villages et y propose des spectacles traitant de la situation des intouchables et des moyens de l'améliorer.
- Réalisation de vidéos didactiques relatifs à la situation sociale des intouchables et à leur histoire culturelle et identitaire.

**Activités réalisées en 2010 :**

Un rapport détaillé des activités est joint en annexe, ci-dessous.

Les activités ont consisté en :

- Constitution d'une troupe de théâtre de rue (Kodaimalai Ambedkar Cultural Troupe) ; recrutement de jeunes dans les villages des Palni Hills.
- Achat de matériel didactique (caméra vidéo, projecteur LCD)
- Formation intensive des acteurs.
- Performances dans les villages (Palamputhur, Puthuputhur).
- Participation à un festival d'art Dalit (Srivilliputhur).
- Formation du travailleur social et d'un jeune intouchable à l'utilisation d'une caméra vidéo.

**Perspectives pour 2011 :**

Un rapport détaillé des activités est joint en annexe, ci-dessous.

- Participation de la troupe à la campagne électorale (State Assembly) de mai 2011.
- Performances dans les villages dalits des Kodai Hills
- Réalisation de courts films sur l'héritage culturel des intouchables

## **FUCID-PEAK development project. Activities report – 2010**

**Fr. Anthony Kulandaisamy, Director of PEAK**

### **Introduction**

The primary aim of starting Kodaimalai Ambedkar Cultural Troupe is to create awareness among the subaltern people of Kodai Hills (Dalits, Tribals and Repatriates) through the traditional folk arts of the marginalized people in Tamilnadu. **“Dalits’ arts are weapon for liberation”**, the motto of our cultural troupe adds greater meaning to the aim. The aim of the cultural troupe is very much realized when the artists bring the stark reality of the present Dalits to the light through skits, comics and dance. During the programme, we could see, the spectators are spell bound nodding their heads to the punch dialogues asserting that it is their reality and feel the need to be aware of cultural and political trends which will eventually lead to social change.

### **Preparation**

The PEAK team decided to choose dalit villages and pick up dalit youth for the cultural troupe. Finally three panchyats were chosen namely Kookal, Poondi and Poombari. We selected 30 youth in the beginning and finally 19 turned up for the practice.

### **First cultural show**

As you are aware that we had the intensive training in April 2010 and we were supposed to have the first programme in Moolaiyar village. The cultural troupe could not perform the programme in a tribal village twice due to some inevitable reasons. Sch Sebastian, who is succeeding Sch. Vargheesh, the trainer of the cultural troupe, visited the artists at their respective villages and held a meeting with them and discussed with them at length the reasons for the failure to perform the programme. At the end of the discussion, the artists decided that the cultural troupe could be resumed but the frequency of this would depend on the seasonal work since all the artists are the agrarian coolies. Accordingly we decided to perform the programme at Palamputhur, a dalit village in the upper hills of Kodaikanal on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010 and the practice would be on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010 at Puthuputhur.

As we had decided we had the practice with the help of Frs. Anbu sj. Professor at St. Xavier’s College, Palayamkottai and good at folk dance and Stephen sj, physical education teacher in Mumbai and a street theatre specialist. Since we resumed the practice after two and a half months, it took sometimes for the artists to orient themselves and settle down. The trainers had to invest a lot of time in bettering the skits and the comics but the dances were in perfect harmony.

A scintillating performance of the artists at Palamputhur in the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> August made the spectators unmoved for two hours. They acknowledged the different issues depicted in the skits. Especially the skit on drug addiction. They were also happy to witness their own traditional dances with extraordinary movements in perfect harmony by their own kith and kins. The leaders of the village felicitated the artists and called the villagers for the prompt action on certain issues that were beautifully brought out through the skits. The feed back at the end of the programme was very positive and encouraging. The people expressed that the cultural events had awakened the people on unlimited disproportionate consumption of liquor and its ill effects. They felt the need for coming together as a whole village from the clutches of television entertainment which blunts thinking ability and the

social responsibility and other activities. The artists also gained a lot of confidence and realized their social responsibility to awaken the people of their own.

## **Second show**

The next programme we had at Puthuputhur on 22nd August 2010. The artists assembled at Puthuputhur in the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> August for the practice with the guidance of Frs. Anbu Sj and Stephen Sj. During the practice we polished the skits with different frozen stills and symbols which were more powerful than dialogues.

The dances and comics enthralled the attention of people of different age. Mr. Amalraj, a school teacher at St. Xavier's Higher secondary school, Shembaganur delivered the talk on Political identity of Dalits and the need for the Dalits to assert this identity. The talk was well heeded by the people. The another speaker Mr. Perumal, teacher in St. Xavier's Higher Secondary School and PEAK's first graduate teacher addressed the people on the present socio- economic and political scenario of Dalits Hills and their status of education. The gathering was really exemplified by the mere presence of Mr. Perumal, the first teacher from Arunthathiyar community of Kodai Hills and aspired that their own children also should become like him. Mr. Perumal, in his talk, challenged the people about the practice of early marriages which leads to enslaved traditional works and emphasized the need for education for liberation. The speciality of this programme was the presentation of some of the cultural events by the village people to the artists. By and large, the people experienced a wonderful cultural fiesta with a lot of message in the form of their own arts. At the end of the programme, the village people hosted the supper for the artists and special invitees. The participation and contribution of the people encouraged the artists to a greater extent.

The feed backs of the people were very optimistic and hopeful. The messages that were brought out by skits were very true in their village and they felt that the issues should be set right in the near future. The talks of the special invitees instigated the people for the need of asserting their identity and made realize the importance of education.

Kodaimalai Ambedkar Cultural Troupe had a maxi exposure programme at the Arunthathiyar Cultural Festival in Srivilliputhur where the folk artists of Arunthathiyar community from all over Tamilnadu were there to present their arts. Our cultural troupe stole the show with variety of cultural events. At the end of every programme, the audience gave big applause in appreciation to the synchronizing steps with specific movements. This exposure has given new perspectives, new understanding and new experience to the artists. They come realize their strengths and weaknesses.

Above all this, this exposure has given them a lot of chance to meet people of their own caste, to interact with them, to listen to the talks of the experienced cadres, to meet the leaders of their own caste from different places. All these experiences were geared towards one focus that all the Arunthathiyars should come under one umbrella to assert their political identity in order to show oppressors that they are no more ready to be oppressed but to shatter the fetters of the cruel and inhuman caste dharma to establish a casteless, egalitarian and just society. At the end of the exposure programme, all the artists expressed that it was an unforgettable, rich and enlightening experience.

We could see the youth receiving visiting cards, writing the mobile numbers and recording the addresses of different leaders who were present there. This gives us a hope that they are going to make social change having greater network with the people of their own community.

The role of Mrs. Kaleeswari and Mr. Velmurugan needs a special mention in this exposure. Mrs. Kaleeswari was the master of ceremony of the Arunthathiyar Cultural Night

programme and captivated the attention of the crowd with her songs and poetic verses. Mr. Velmurugan, PEAK supported high school teacher at Kauvinji, coordinated all our cultural events with a powerful introduction. The participation of our artists in the festival gives us a hope that they would surely make use of the Dalits' arts as weapon for liberation.

### **Difficulties we faced**

1. Since the artists are early school drop outs, they could not bring themselves both in action and in language according to the context of the drama.
2. Since all the artists are from agrarian families, they find some difficulties in coming together for the ongoing practices that were held periodically.
3. Since Kodaikanal is a hilly region, village people find hard to watch the whole programme due to the cold breeze in the evening as it becomes late.
4. Since there was heavy rain this year we couldn't perform continuously in villages.

### **Suggestions**

Since there is going to be the state assembly election in the coming month of May 2011 we are all geared towards the election process. As each political party prepares the election manifesto we are now concentrating on the preparation of People's Election Manifesto.

Once the election date is announced we can use this cultural troupe to distribute Kodai Hills Marginalised People's Manifesto to the poor villagers.

While performing a cultural show in a village we can also use our LCD projector to show one or two documentary films related to our themes. If we perform our programme for one hour and thirty minutes we can also take another one hour to show such films. But we should not make any compromise with the youth's cultural performances. We see to it that we give much importance to cultural troupe than to films.

Since we are going to perform the programmes intensely we shall get ready with the uniform for the artists.

We hope to cover all the dalit villages by the end of May 2011 by showing cultural performance till May 2011

### **Village animator**

Sch. Sebastian is the animator who meets the youth regularly and conducts the cultural programme.

- He is also trained to handle the video camera that we bought with the FUCID money
- Whenever he goes to those villages where our cultural troupe members are he conducts a short meeting and plan with them
- Now from March middle onwards he will be fully involved in training the youth in performances and taking them to demonstrate them in villages

### **Use of handycam**

- At present 20 youth are undergoing cadre training – this handycamera is very useful to train the youth- their public speech is recorded and played back to them – thus they are well trained in giving speech
- We have trained one dalit youth how to handle the camera – his service is used to tape the cultural heritage of the tribals

## **LCD Projector**

Last ten days we have been conducting conferences for the dalit and tribal youth in Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur. So LCD is very much useful to show socially oriented CDs and DVDs.

It is also useful for the children's homes to show them pictures.