

Quarterly Narrative Report
Women Empowerment Program
January 2017 to March 2017



Project title: Women Empowerment Program
Project funding agency: Bajaj Auto- Limited
Implementing organization: CORD Thamaraiakkam
Operational areas: Sivanvoyal, Velliur Panchayats



> **Project background:**

CORD facilitates sustainable, participatory and integrated rural development in remote villages of India. Women empowerment is the key aspect of CORD's program. This is because we find many rural women helpless victims of domestic violence, gender discrimination, social crimes, and subordination and so on. *Mahila Mandals* serves as a forum of support for women to bond and come out with collective solutions transforming them from passive members to active contributors of the community. When women unite in strength, they operate out of confidence to resolve individual and community issues. Through the Bajaj project CORD aims to empower rural women especially from the vulnerable and marginalized sections through various participatory activities such as nutritious kitchen gardening, livelihood skill training, poultry, mushroom cultivation and many such farm and non-farm sector activities.

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> **Project operational area, development block and panchayat under the project intervention**

Sivanvoyal and Velliur Panchayats of Tiruvallur Block in Tiruvallur District of Tamilnadu have been chosen for the project interventions.

> **Identification of Women for special intervention under the program:**

All rural women in the project operational area are accepted with a special attention to women under the following criteria:

- Poorest of the poor
- Single women
- Differently abled or having a differently abled person in the family
- Lactating and pregnant women
- Women with children of age <3 years

> **Panchayat wise list of women selected under the Program**

A participatory rural appraisal exercise is done in the Mahila Mandal to identify the most deserving beneficiaries as well as the challenges and needs of the communities.

Panchayats	Total Women identified for special intervention	SC	ST	OBC	Gen	OC	MBC	BC
Tamilnadu/ Tiruvallur Block/ Sivanvoyal & Velliur Panchayats	524	155	11	33	18		192	115
No. of new HHs enrolled during the current reporting quarter Jan - Mar,2017)								
		37					5	
Total till date	566	192	11	33	18		197	115

> **Coverage of ward for special intervention**

Panchayats	Total No. of Ward	Total no. of ward covered during last reporting period	Total no. of new ward covered during current reporting period	Total ward covered till date
Sivanvoyal	6	6		6
Velliur	9	6		6
Total	15	12		12

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> **Formation of Mahila Mandal (Women Groups)**

Panchayats	Total no. of Mahila Mandal (MMs) formed till last reporting period (Oct-Dec,2016)		Total no. of Mahila Mandal formed during this reporting period (Jan-Mar,2017)		Total no. of MMs & members covered till date		Grade			
	No. of MMs	No. of Members	No. of MMs	No. of Members	No. of MMs	No. of Members	No. of MMs in A grade	No. of MMs in B grade	No. of MMs in C grade	No. of MMs in D grade
Sivanvoyal	7	218	4	7	7	222	2	5		
Velliyur	11	277	1	37	12	314	3	7	2	
Total	18	495	1	37	19	532	0	5	12	2



> **Formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs)**

Panchayats	Total no. SHG formed	Total number of women members	Grade			
			No. of SHG in A grade	No. of SHG in B grade	No. of SHG in C grade	No. of SHG in D grade
Sivanvoyal	8	120		3	3	2
Velliyur	18	248		8	4	6
Total	26	368		11	7	8

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➤ **Formation of Adolescent groups**

Panchayats	Total no. of Adolescent groups formed	Total number of Adolescent members	Grade			
			No. of AG in A grade	No. of AG in B grade	No. of AG in C grade	No. of AG in D grade
Sivanvoyal	4	62	1	1	2	
Velliyur	3	42		2	1	
Total	7	104	1	3	3	

➤ **Formation of Balvihar**

Panchayats	Total no. of Balvihar groups formed	Total number of Children members
Sivanvoyal	5	119
Velliyur	6	132
Total	11	251



➤ **Status of poorest of the poor and vulnerable household covered under women institution under the program**

Panchayat	Poorest of the poor		Disable women	No. of HHs having disability	Single women	Divorcee women	Women headed HHs
	BPL	Those family who are not in BPL list but actually poorest of the poor					
Sivanvoyal & Velliyur Panchayats	48	316	10	17	112	3	161
No. of new HHs enrolled during the current reporting quarter (Jan - Mar,2017)							
	7	28		3	13		30

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Total till date	55	344	10	20	125	3	191
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> **Understanding of socio-economic status of operational area under the project (Participatory Rapid Rural Appraisal baseline survey):**

To understand the Panchayat selected we undertook a few participatory rural appraisal exercises to identify the needs, challenges, gaps and strengths of the communities in the area. This has enabled an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic and health, nutrition, sanitation, gender discrimination conditions in the communities. Special attention was given to include poor households with lactating mothers and children aged two years and below. Below are some of the major findings:

1. The most needy beneficiaries are the ones who are generally left out because of their very busy lifestyle and so extra measures were taken to specially address and include them
2. Some of the women were reluctant to include the marginalized because they felt that they cannot be held responsible and trusted in financial matters. A lot of coaxing and awareness had to be made to help them overcome their inhibitions and include the vulnerable sections
3. Although many women could improve their livelihood or at least reduce their expenses through small scale livelihood activities like poultry, mushroom cultivation, kitchen gardening, except a few, most were unaware and not motivated to venture and improve their lifestyles. Special videos and exposures have to be organized to motivate and guide them.
4. Through these small activities a lot of unity and self-esteem building in the community can happen which was previously lacking.

Also these incentives are used to motivate them to not only improve their livelihood but also to address community issues such as sanitation, social inclusion and especially waste management and environmental cleanliness.

> **Concept building trainings to leaders of Mahila Mandal:**



- Capacity building trainings are given to the leaders of the Mahila Mandal from time to time.
- The leaders are empowered to conduct meetings, maintain registries, keep accounts and organize events.
- The objective is to make the CBOs self-reliant and sustainable by distributing responsibilities and ownership, by participating in decision making and contributing minimal amounts as well as making efforts in doing things by themselves.
- They are encouraged to address various socio-economic issues as a collective.
- The leaders mobilize the other resources and motivate them to participate as well.
- They help identify the neediest beneficiaries.
- They help identify and train the village volunteer resource persons to address specific socio-economic issues in the community.

Panchayat	No. of training conducted	No. Mahila Mandal's leaders trained
Sivanoyal & Velliye	2	22

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➤ **Promotion of Kitchen Gardening**

- The main motto behind kitchen gardening is to provide the women a means to grow some fruits and vegetables needed for their family and thereby meet their nutritional needs at low cost.
- Every beneficiary was given 2 types of green leaves, bottle gourd, snake gourd, beans, ladies finger, green beans and drumstick.
- Those who did not have space were encouraged to grow these in plastic buckets, covers, bottles, tins, etc. Some even ventured into terrace farming.
- They were shown videos and pictures of various means of kitchen and terrace gardening to motivate and give them some ideas.
- This project was a big hit in the community.

Panchayat	No. of HHs started Kitchen Gardening (July-Sep-2016)	No. of new HHs doing Kitchen gardening (Oct- Dec-2016)	No. of HHs doing Kitchen gardening (Jan-Mar 2017)	No. of HHs producing sufficient vegetable	No. of HHs producing surplus
Sivanoyal Velliyur	330	43	277	60%	20%



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➤ **Promotion of horticulture**

Fruit plants like guava, sapota, pomegranate, mango and banana were distributed to the mahila mandal members. The objective is to enable the poor to grow their own fruits and vegetables in their own homes or fields and meet their nutritional needs without much costs. Last quarter we distributed lemon, papaya and drumstick. Unfortunately due to vardah cyclone that hit Tiruvallur district in December 2016 felling one lakh trees overall many of the saplings were destroyed. Again we distributed about 1000 saplings of fruit trees like guava, sapota, pomegranate, mango.

Panchayat	No. of new HHs planted fruit plant (Oct- Dec,2016)	No. of HHs planted fruit plant (Jan-Mar 2017)	Survival rate (Oct- Dec,2016) lemon, papaya, banana and drumstick	Survival rate (Jan-Mar 2017) guava, sapota, pomegranate, mango
Sivanoyal & Velliyur	307	280	40% (some where destroyed by Vardah cyclone)	90%



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> **Promotion of Poultry**

Poultry is encouraged among our mahila mandal women giving priority to those who are landless and marginalized. Although many qualified only 1 or 2 women from each group were selected initially as a trial venture. Each woman was given a poultry cage with 3 desi hens and 1 cock which are one month old and vaccinated. The women were also trained on how to take care of the poultry. Due to extreme heat expected in upcoming summer months we have only chosen 20 women as beneficiaries so we can verify how many of the chicks will survive the heat. Many more women are requesting for chicks and have even made their own cages.

Panchayat	No. of HHs started poultry (July-Dec,2016)	No. of new HHs started poultry (Jan - Mar 2017)	Total HHs covered (till date)
Sivanvoyal & Velliyur Panchayats		20	20



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> **Promotion of Azola cultivation**

Azolla activity was promoted with the main motive of enabling the beneficiaries to grow nutritious fodder for cows, goats and poultry at a very low cost. Once a year Director of Cattle fodder research station, Alapati visits our Azolla units and provides guidance.

Panchayat	No. of HHs started Azola cultivation (July-Sep,2016)	No. of new HHs started Azola cultivation (Oct-Dec,2016)	No. of new HHs started Azola cultivation (Jan - Mar 2017)
Sivanvoyal & Vellyur Panchayats	19	8	4



> **Upa Gram Sabha and Gram Sabha facilitated:**

- **In the quarter July to Sep** Due to local elections, public meetings were not generally allowed but we conducted 3 meetings and 40 members participated. Gram sabha was not conducted.
- **In Oct - Dec quarter**, 6 upa gram sabhas were conducted wherein 60 participated. Some of the issues that were discussed and resolved through gram sabha were OAP card issuing, identification of beneficiaries for house under IAY scheme, street lamp installation and cleaning of water tanks.
- **In the quarter from Jan - Mar 2017**, 6 upa gram sabhas were conducted wherein 120 participated.
- **In Sivanvoyal Gram sabha** People discussed about the destruction caused by cyclone to street lamps, posts, their houses and fields. Women demanded the relief fund of Rs. 4000/- allotted by Govt for cyclone victims for some of the needy people who were left out.
- **In Vellyur gram sabha**, drinking water and road issues of ward 7 and 8 were discussed. Green house under IAY scheme was granted to 1 beneficiary. Cyclone relief fund amount of Rs. 4000/- was released for 4 beneficiaries. Victims from ward 1 submitted their application for cyclone relief. Ration smart ATM card was announced. Women from Dideer nagar demanded patta for their land. Women from ward 2 raised issues with ration shopkeeper

Panchayat	No. of Up gram Sabha facilitated (Oct-Dec,2016)		No. of Up gram Sabha facilitated (Jan - Mar 2017)	
	No of Up Gram Sabha	Total no of members participated	No of Up Gram Sabha	Total no of members participated

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Sivanvoyal & Velliyur Panchayats	6	60	6	120
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➤ **Promotion of Bio formulation**

Bio-fertilizers are promoted to reduce the usage of pesticide and bring in a harmonious conversion to organic methods of farming which are less expensive and conducive to increased sustainable production in an eco-friendly pollution free environment.

Panchayat	No. of HHs adopted during the last reporting quarters (Jul - Dec),2016)					
	Panchgavya /Matka	Bio-pesticide like Dashpami	Vermi wash	Jivamrut	Vermi compost	IPM practices
Sivanvoyal & Velliyur Panchayats	14	15	2	6	18	
	No. of new HHs enrolled during the current reporting quarter (Jan - Mar,2017)					
	22	13	5	0	0	
Total till date	36	28	7	6	18	



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> **Promotion of Sea salt agriculture and SRI (system of rice intensification)**

Major problem faced by village farmers is high input cost involved in chemical farming. In order to get a good yield they end up spending a lot for expenses such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides and weedicides. With the help of Sri. Shrikant Pohankar from Pohankar Foundations, Pune, CORD Thamaraiykkam conducted a workshop and demo on use of sea salt as fertilizer and pesticide to the farmers in Sivanvoyal and Velliur Panchayats. This method of farming can reduce the input costs by 80%, increase the yield as well completely eradicate the bad side effects of using chemicals in agricultural soil. This was welcomed by the farmers with a critical eye. Although all were enthused by the idea of reduced input costs, many showed initial resistance to try it out as they were afraid of any negative impact on yield or soil nature. After a lot of clarifications and practical demos about 30 farmers have come forward to implement sea salt farming in a portion of their land. So far there seems to be no major difference between this and the chemical farming. Harvest time will tell us more about the real impact.



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➤ **Promotion of Sanitation & hygiene**

Most Panchayats in Tiruvallur Dt are divided into wards based on the community of people. All SC and ST people live together, MBC people live together and so on. Discrimination based on community is too strong in rural villages. People belonging to different communities have separate temples and live separately. In a few villages they may get along and live without fights but in most villages often bickering turns into community riots especially during times of temple festivals. Marriage between communities is a taboo. Wards where SC/ST live are called colonies and are usually lacking in sanitation, hygiene and environmental cleanliness compared to the other wards. This is also a main reason why they don't get along. Under Hajaj, CORD Thamaraiakkam started the sanitation project this quarter with special focus on colonies with an aim to change the lifestyle of SC/ST communities into a healthy and clean one so they are in par with the rest of the communities in hygiene and thereby in self-esteem as well. Therefore sanitation kits comprising of bathing soap, tooth brush, tooth paste, nail cutter, comb, detergent, shampoo, sanitary pad, etc worth Rs. 150 were distributed to MM members in colonies with a participatory contribution of Rs. 30/- Most of the products were bought from Patanjali to create an increased awareness on products made in Indian villages.

Awareness on waste segregation, individual toilet construction, soakage pit and compost pit is spread and emphasized in every MM meeting and women who follow our guidance are encouraged with small incentives like a tree sapling or sanitary napkins.

Mahila Mandal members are encouraged to bring the collected plastic waste for the MM meeting from where CORD arranges the waste to be picked up. These plastics wastes are given to a SHG in Ayappakkam who shred this waste and sell it to Government PWD department for tar road constructions.

In this quarter CORD has facilitated the below:

Toilet	7
Soakage pit	11
Garbage pit	7
Sanitation kit	260



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> Promotion of Non Farm Sector Activities

Non-farm sector activities are promoted with the objective to identify and develop innate skills, increase livelihood income, to encourage entrepreneurship and help them be self-reliant.

Panchayat	No. of HHs adopted during the last reporting quarter (Jul - Sep),2016)					
	Sewing	Food product	Pain Balm	Incense stick	Rug making	
Sivanvoyal & Velliur Panchayat	30	11	13	8	9	
No. of new HHs enrolled during the Last reporting quarter (Oct - Dec,2016)						
	Hand painting	Screen printing	Pain Balm	Incense stick	Mural and terracotta jewelry making	Ari embroidery work
No. of women trained	26	25	20	20	12	18
Total no. of women who adopted till date	12	6			2	4
No. of new HHs enrolled during the current reporting quarter (Jan - Mar, 2017)						
	Thread jewelry training		Ari embroidery work			
No. of women trained	20		6			
Total no. of women who adopted till date	5		4			



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➤ **Capacity Building training conducted**

- Capacity building trainings are given to the leaders of the Mahila Mandal and village volunteer resource persons from time to time.
- This is done with the motive to address specific socio-economic issues in the community, build their self-esteem and self-reliance.

Subject of training	No. of Participant trained	No of participants adopted learning's of trainings
Sea salt agriculture	36	25
SRI cultivation	3	3
Cattle fodder cultivation	30	20
Poultry training	20	20
VVRP for sanitation & hygiene	18	18



➤ **Vardah Cyclone relief:**

- Due to heavy monsoon rains in December followed by Vardah cyclone routine life was very much disturbed in the villages. There was no electricity for 2 – 3 weeks as 300 electric posts had fallen and consequently there was water scarcity as well. This very much impacted our project implementation and regular activities in December and January. About 80 households within our operational area lost their homes partially/fully due to the cyclone. Some of the project money was decided to be used for the cyclone relief to distribute cement sheets, flatched roofs, tarpaulin and other roof materials so the afflicted poor can safeguard themselves against the adverse weathers.

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Success stories

Cyclone relief

5 households in Sivanvoyal colony ward 3 situated on the banks of the village pond were devastated by the cyclone. Minnala, Poundari, Ponnammal, Alamelu, Lillypushpam were stranded without a roof over their heads. And so were Archana and Amuda. CORD Thamarapakkam distributed thatched roof tiles and sheets so they can put a roof over their heads and live safely. They feel grateful to Bajaj and CORD for helping them in times of distress.



Similarly in Velliyur Panchayat, Dideer nagar hamlet was greatly affected by the rain and cyclone. Dideer nagar literally means 'sudden city' and as the name suggests this place was suddenly created when the highway was expanded. The few families on the road side were given some space on the low lying area between the road the village pond. Because of this odd positioning of this hamlet, these families are the first victims in any flood, cyclone or rains and also the most easily forgotten group at times of relief by Government. Thanks to Bajaj and CORD, they received timely help and could reconstruct their broken homes and be back on their feet quickly.

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Kitchen garden: Vellyur colony and Sivanvoyal colony are hamlets of poor and marginalized SC people who do not have much agricultural land or even space around their homes for kitchen garden. Until a few months ago they had never tried to grow vegetables. CORD motivated them and taught them to keep kitchen garden by showing videos and through practical demos. Now most of them grow creepers like snake gourd, bottle gourd and bitter gourd which do not require much space.

Kokila of Sivanvoyal colony is motivated to grow more vegetables and sell them for livelihood. Since she has some land space she encourages and supports her MM teammates to also use the space for their Kitchen garden. Nirmala, Nagarani, Padmasvati, Amuda and others jointly grow their own vegetables in Kokila's backyard.



Vasanta of Vellyur colony has never grown vegetables now she maintains a beautiful garden in her backyard which was filled with plastic rubbish once. She is now even making vermin compost pit and organic manure for her kitchen garden.

In Bandikavanur, Usha and Kasturi have started selling vegetables from their Kitchen garden too.

Many MM members excitedly greet the staff with drumstick in their hands as the saplings given last quarter have started flowering and yielding now.

Mushroom was unheard of in these villages. And it required hygienic secluded room space which many could not afford. In **Vellyur colony, Saraswati of Yanavil MM** had constructed a new house and could lend her old thatched hut for her MM members to cultivate mushroom. The first time they experimented, mushroom came out black in color. But without losing heart they cleaned the whole space again and tried with more caution. All 20 members tied one bag each in the little hut with their names on their bags. This time they could harvest nutritious mushrooms for their families.



In **Sivanvoyal ward 1, Indra, Tamil, chitra, Shenbagavalli** of Padiya bharatham MM cleaned their Panchayat MM building which was unused and cultivated mushroom in 16 bags. Apart from relishing in their homes and sharing with other MM members they even had enough for sales.

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In Nallangavanur, Valarmati and Sudha cultivated mushroom in an unused shut down library room in the Panchayat.

Action Plan for next Quarter (April - June, 2017)

Sr. No	Planned Activities	Year -2017		
		April	May	June
1	Children and youth empowerment camps		(0) X	
2	Appraisal and Appreciation of Mahila Mandals			X
3	Construction of soak pit, compost pit, low cost toilets and motivation for individual toilets	X	X	X
4	Continued VVRP and leadership capacity building training	X	X	X
5	Awareness on waste segregation	X	X	X
6	Balvihar & Valarmati programs - educating the children and adolescent girls of villages	X	X	X

Conclusion: Overall the rural women especially from the vulnerable sections are being empowered in a very constructive way to become positive contributors of the society through this program. This program has paved a way for the women to come together as a united force to resolve individual and community issues. The kitchen garden project has motivated many to cultivate however little they can in the very little space around. These projects have potential to transform lives through active participation and awareness and capacity building.

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