

Profile of organization

Context of the community:

In the caste-ridden Indian society, Madiga community is the most oppressed community and is treated as untouchables even today. Madigas in Tumkur, Pavagada, Madhugiri and Sira blocks are migrant agriculture laborers. They live on pavements and slums having fear of demolition at anytime. Basic human rights like housing, drinking water, healthcare & education are not in their reach. Local money lenders and dominant caste people exploit them in day to day lives. The same community is now working as manual scavengers, sweepers and manhole workers in rural and urban areas.

Tumkur district is located around 75 km from state capital Bangalore in Karnataka. In Tumkur town, scavengers live in around 10 slum areas. Each slum area has a population of minimum 100 Madiga families. They work for Rs. 1000 -2000 per month for cleaning of one housing/ commercial society (approx 150 houses). There are no other sources of income among them. While around 1842 Madiga men and women are employed directly (permanent and on contract) by the Tumkur and Pavagada Municipal Corporation, rest of them are working in the unorganized sector cleaning housing societies, hospitals, commercial complexes, multiplexes and schools, etc. Their conditions of work are not fair and environment is unhygienic. They are rarely given less labor intensive and hygiene promoting equipments and social security is not taken care of. A recent survey shows that their life expectancy is only 50 years.

In such circumstances, Thamate (Centre for Rural Empowerment) was initiated in 1995 as the first step to educate, mobilise and organise Madiga community in Tumkur and Pavagada city. It was registered as a Thamate (Centre for Rural Empowerment) under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act 1969. Thamate works in 4 blocks (Tumkur, Pavagada, Madugiri and Sira) and 4 Municipalities (Tumkur Municipal Corporation, Pavagada Municipality, Madugiri Municipality, Sira City Corporation). It reaches out to 53 villages in Pavagada and Madugiri blocks.

Since its inception in 2006, Thamate has addressed following issues:

- Eradication of manual scavenging
- Alternate employment for scavenging community
- Education for children of scavenging community
- Social security of sweepers & manhole workers
- Health entitlements
- Accessing government schemes and programs

Strategies adopted by Thamate:

- Participating and contributing to national and state level networks on various issues such as Safai Karmachari Andolan, Safai Karmachari Kavalu Samiti, NCDHR, Jan Arogya Andolan, Right to Food Campaign, National Alliance of People's Movement (NAPM) etc.
- Advocacy at local level with local government

- Being part of legal advocacy process through PIL in High Court of Karnataka
- Educating and empowering community
- Leadership cadre building
- Promoting community monitoring committees
- Setting up education support centers for children
- Linkages with other organizations and institutions for vocational skill training of youth

Achievements of past 2 years:

- 345 water facility toilets have been constructed to prevent manual scavenging
- 160 manual scavengers have completely given up inhuman occupation of manual scavenging
- 24 cases of manhole workers' deaths at different places in Karnataka were taken up. Thamate's involvement includes fact finding, filing FIRs, negotiating proper compensation and follow up.
- 291 sweepers have received safety equipments (cap, gloves, mask, apron and shoes) and are using them.
- 4 education support centers, educating 217 children in the age group of 6-14 years..
- 8 government schools are being monitored for implementation of RTE Act and check discriminatory practices towards scavenging children.
- 59 children motivated for education through Children's residential camps. These camps also brought out talents in them.
- 185 children were enrolled in government & private schools, hostels and colleges.
- 102 children were supported in getting scholarship.
- 55 youth have been enrolled in various vocational skill training courses
- 179 scavengers have taken up alternate employment (jobs or self employment)
- 5 PHCs are being monitored.
- Community based monitoring groups set up and strengthened at 5 locations.
- 76 community based volunteer leaders have emerged, who are being capacitated through trainings, handholding and accompaniment to government departments.
- 209 families were supported to enroll for Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (subsidized health insurance scheme of government) and ESI cards.
- 110 scavenging families have been supported to access housing rights (housing site and built houses).
- 1003 persons have been supported to access government schemes for pensions, ration cards, maternity benefit, self employment, provident fund, NREGA, etc.
- Schemes for community welfare (drinking water, drainage, etc.) were also mobilized in last 2 years.

Thamate (Centre for Rural Empowerment) has received financial support from Dalit Foundation (2005-2008), SDTT Sir Dorabji Tata Trust-Mumbai, and Jamshedji Tata Trust 2009-2010 till date. We also have received support from organisations such as Community Health Cell (CHC) Bangalore, ISI- Bangalore, NDF- National Dalit Forum, Hyderabad and Human Institutional Development Forum (HIDF), Bangalore to work on issue-based activities such as

sustainable livelihoods, comprehensive health, and building cadres for supporting Dalit Community.

Thamate is the partner organisation at State and National Level for organising larger campaigns, like

- Scavengers Dignity forum- SDF
- Peoples' Health Movement Karnataka (JAAK)
- Janaswasthya abiyani- JSA
- Safikarmachari kavalu samithi KARNATAKA- SKKS
- Grameena kooli karmika sanghatane- GRAKUS
- National Dalit Forum- NDF
- National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights- NCDHR
- National Campaign on Dalits Organizations- NACDOR
- And Right Food Campaign (RFC)
- National Alliance Peoples Movement (NAPM)