

# Climate Change and Children



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A study conducted by:  
Society for People's Education  
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**(SPEECH)**



## Resource Center for participatory Development Studies

The Resource Centre promotes and supports the development of socially marginalized communities through participatory research on policy framework, training and capacity building of partner communities and fellow NGOs, networking and information dissemination, and advocacy interventions.

The Resource center also works directly in the field among Dalits, socially excluded groups, and children of all sections with rights perspective to draw current lessons and strengthen mutual learning processes, institutionalizing child rights approach among its partners as well promotion of Self Help Groups through their federation and extending institutional support towards mainstreaming child rights approach. All interventions and initiatives of RCPDS practice participatory approach to research and project implementation processes.

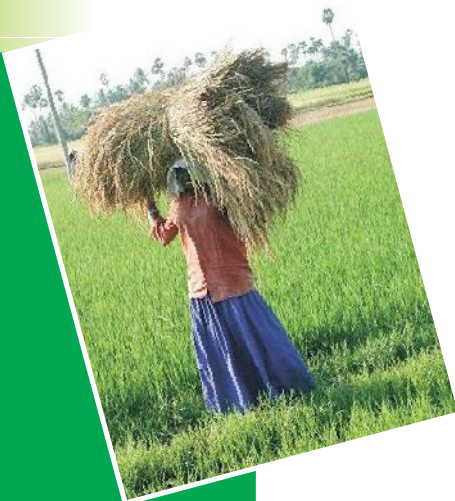
In addition, the center emphasis on close collaboration and consultation with wide range of institutions/Universities, both in the South and in the North.

RCPDS extend its research and documentation experience through learning exchange visits both in the European and African region. Currently field interventions of RCPDS are supported by partners such as Kinder Not Hilfe, Germany and Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, Scotland.



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# Acronyms



<b>CODE</b>	Community Organization for Development Education
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organization
<b>PRA</b>	Participatory Rural Appraisal
<b>RCPDS</b>	Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies
<b>RRO</b>	RRO
<b>SPEECH</b>	Society for People's Education and Economic Change
<b>TEST</b>	Trust for Education and Social Transformation
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>WC</b>	Women's Collective





# Acknowledgment



*The study entitled "Climate Change and Children" was successfully completed with the collaborative efforts of many; and we express our heartfelt thanks to hundreds of community members and children who took part in the study with enthusiasm in spite of their work and other household chores. The support and coordination of our networked NGOs viz. CODE, TEST, Women's Collective, and RRO to these efforts have been crucial and we remain indebted to them all.*

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*On behalf of study team*

*Dr. John Deevaram.*



# Preface



Climate change and its effect on human are being understood and gained ground in the development circles. One of the key constituencies that are affected is children, and there have been little efforts towards understanding the effects on children and identifying areas of action. This document provides a brief on the participatory learning exercise undertaken by SPEECH, with the support of Vrutti Livelihood Resource Centre, in South India, to understand the impact of climate change on children, and suggestions for moving forward. The experiences shared by the communities and evidences presented in this learning exercise confirm the ill-effects of climatic vagaries on Children, and their increased vulnerability to climatic changes.

Vulnerable communities, who are the least contributors to the climate change, are the worst affected. Evidences of micro-level effects of macro policies and priorities of the government adding to problems are clearly emerging, i.e. the vulnerabilities have increased manifold due to improper industrialization, urbanization and infrastructure development, and also due to their status within the society. The study also highlights the lack of any systematic efforts at the local or policy level to even understand and assess the nature of these ill-effects. The measures adopted by the communities to mitigate effects are mostly sailing with the situation.

The findings from the study point towards the criticality of the issue and the urgency for all actors to focus and address this issue. The wisdom and the learning from the communities in combination with technologies and innovations can provide useful interventions to address these effectively. Focused and coordinated efforts, both at the policy level and on the field is the need of the hour. The trend at the grassroots shows clearly that unless the efforts are put in immediately, there is a danger of presenting an earth to our future generations that does not assure them safe and secured future.



## Foreword



Climate change is one crisis, which challenges all of humanity in a way that will have enormous consequences for the sustainability of our planet. The crisis is imminent and needs an urgent response.

I congratulate SPEECH for its comprehensive study on Children and Climate Change, perhaps one of few such studies available in the Indian context. Given the scant attention on viewing the climate change from the lens of children, this initiative is relevant and timely.

Children, as the study suggests are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This applies especially to the children from marginalised communities residing in various eco-systems in India. The study points out to the various dimensions of this impact. It is true that within the various eco-systems such as the coastal, forest, mountainous, arid, river flood plains and the urban areas in India, it is the children who will face grave effects as the family finds it harder to cope with external realities and thus even harder to bear the brunt of the livelihood loss and pain.

These impacts need to be addressed squarely, keeping the future of the children as the upfront concern.

It is the children of today who will be citizens of tomorrow. The effects of the climate change will be felt more poignantly in the coming decades. Undoubtedly, the leadership must and will emerge from the current generation of children. Hence, it becomes crucial to engage with children both at the level of awareness creation as well as effective action.

The world leaders have failed us. International negotiations to date are a disaster as was evident from the outcome at the Conference of Parties (COP) 15 in Copenhagen in December 2009. What is obvious is that an ethical leadership is lacking among the present decision makers. The children of today are the hope for tomorrow. The study on Children and Climate Change is an effective investment for a hopeful future!

I offer my very best wishes to SPEECH for its future intervention on Children and Climate Change.

Nafisa Goga D'Souza  
Convenor,  
Indian Network on Ethics and Climate Change  
Visakahpatnam

# Foreword



## MADURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY

(UGC's University with Potential for Excellence)

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

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25<sup>th</sup> February, 2010

**Climate change and Children** – A study conducted by the Society for People's Education and Economic Change is not only a novel one but also an essential aspect of the environmental crisis faced by the mankind in recent times. Climate change is expected to increase risks of large scale disasters in the environment, particularly abnormal rise in ambient temperature, water scarcity, droughts, diseases and decline in food production. It is scary to notice that the developing countries will be the worst affected due to climate change. Most of India's poor people are living in rural areas relying mostly on natural resources and hence at a greater risk of facing the challenges of climate change. This is all the more important from the point of view of the children of these less fortunate people. Therefore the study undertaken by the team of people from SPEECH and associates is a timely one.

The study has attempted to compile whatever the little information that already exists on climate change in the form of a brief review which covers information such as the threat to human security, impact on developing countries and the livelihood of people. The study indicates the greater concern about today's children because they are the ones to bear the greatest burden of climate change impacts. This is because the children are more susceptible to the adverse effects of environmental degradation, diseases and malnutrition.

The study, carefully designed, well planned and meticulously carried out, has covered nine different locations across six different livelihood regions which has brought out valuable information based on participatory rural appraisal techniques supported by semi-structured interviews and case studies. The methodological tools included in the study are Problem tree, Time line and Trend changes, Occupational Transition, Seasonal Analysis, and Livelihood Resource Mapping. The three different southern districts of Tamilnadu State covered in this study have included people dependent on a wide variety of livelihood options such as dry land agriculture, river basin agriculture, forest, salt pans, fisheries and industries.

The study, after careful analysis, has come out with solid recommendations for sustainable development which include, striking a balance in development policies and actions supporting various sectors, and recognition of the ecological rights of children for a safe and secure environment. The findings of the study would be of value to environmentalists, administrators and policy makers. Having understood the dimensions and proportions of the climate change effects, it is only appropriate that the study concludes with the statement "Let's create a safer world for our children".

A.K. Kumraguru.

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# Foreword



## University of Madras

Climate change is the most heinous threat the humanity has faced since its origination. The human being has been encountering many a number of challenges throughout his existence, they vary from –predator animals, wrath of nature in the form of flood or drought, ceaseless wars waged by countries against one another with the inclusion of latest nuclear weapon's threat. But climate change is the most fatal among them all. If left unabated and unattended climate change would wipe off the human existence from the face of the earth. Though, we all knew that it was imminent, this is only now that we are waking up to the threat which stares large on our face. There is a global consensus about the threat posed by the climate change. The disagreement is only on how to go about altering human activities that unleash greenhouse gases, fuelling global warming.

A group of scientists have recently reported on the surprisingly speedy rise in the discharge of carbon and methane release from frozen tundra in Siberia, now starting to melt because human adventurism increases earth's temperature. Similarly one more team of scientists has disclosed that in a single year Greenland witnessed 32 glacial earthquakes between 4.6 and 5.1 on the richter scale. This is a disturbing sign and points to a huge destabilization that may now be in progress deep within the second biggest accretion of ice on the planet. This ice would be enough to raise sea level 20 feet worldwide if it broke up and slipped into the sea.

Closer home in India, a trend of sea level rise of 1 cm per decade has been recorded along the Indian coast. This would inundate low lying areas, down coastal marshes and wetlands, erode beaches, exacerbate flooding and increase the salinity of rivers, bays and aquifers. Medical science suggests that the rise in temperature and change in humidity will adversely affect human health in India.

The rhetoric on climate change is hardly matched by action. The recently global meeting on climate change at Copenhagen was nothing more than a conflict between Economy and Ecology. There was a no holds barred fight between developed and developing countries in blaming each other for climate change and nothing fruitful emerged.

With such a doomsday prophecy in offering, the worst sufferers would be the future generation which would be in the hands of our children. Therefore, Dr. John Devaram and his study team's scientific and systematic effort to relate climate change with children could not have come a day earlier. I am sure this research study would go a long way in mitigating the suffering of our tiny tots owing to the demonic climate change.

(Col. Dr. G. Thiruvassagam)  
Vice Chancellor  
University of Madras.

# Introduction



Climate change, a global issue, poses a major threat to human security. The first comprehensive report into the human cost of climate change warns the world in the throes of a "silent crisis" that is killing 300,000 people each year. More than 300 million people are already seriously affected by the gradual warming of the earth and that number is set to double by 2030, the report from the Global Humanitarian Forum warns. Countries and communities that are contributing less to this cause, but unable to anticipate and respond to climate change are the worst affected. Marginalized sections, particularly rural communities, women and children, are often most sensitive and exposure to the ill-effects of climate change and at the same time have much lower adaptive capacity than others.

Research studies have shown that climate change will be a major hindrance to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to sustain development progress over the longer term. The adverse effects of climate change will have a direct impact on the livelihoods and quality of life of communities and subsequently affects achievement of MDGs relating to poverty, child health and survival.

Climate change crisis also poses a serious challenge to children rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child which assures to protect and preserve the right of every child to a safe, healthy environment in which to develop and grow is becoming very difficult to comply as children become the soft targets of climate crisis.

Despite the fact that marginalized communities and their children are more vulnerable and worst hit by climate crisis, less their participation and involvement in formulating policies and actions to mitigate and adapt.

This study intends to draw the attention of national and international policy makers to understand the perception of vulnerable communities and their children on climate change and its impact on their livelihood and overall quality of life and their expectations/demands to tackle the crisis.



# Literature Review



This chapter is prepared based on a literature review conducted as part of study. This review analyzes and presents the outcomes of various studies conducted across globe in a nutshell. At the end, the review highlights major findings, gaps and suggestions from which form a base for significance of the current study.

Climate change, a threat to human security: HDR 2007/08 reports that "Climate change is the greatest challenge facing humanity at the start of the 21st Century. Any failure to meet the challenge raises the spectrum of unprecedented reversals in human development." According to Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), issued in 2007 by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Climate change is expected to increase risks of large-scale disasters as well as contribute to more gradual systemic changes. Human security risks from factors such as political instability, economic weakness, water scarcity, food insecurity and large-scale migration will be compounded by climate change. Developing countries will be worst hit by changes in rainfall patterns, greater weather extremes and increasing drought and floods. The report forecasts, in Asia, by 2050, decreasing fresh water availability in most areas could put more than a billion people at risk. Increased deaths and illness are expected from diarrheal diseases, associated with increased flooding and drought, and from cholera, resulting from higher sea temperatures.



Impact of climate change on developing countries: Over 96 per cent of all disaster-related deaths worldwide in recent years have occurred in developing countries. Climatic shocks also cause more general setbacks to economic and social development in developing countries. Since agriculture accounts for a larger percentage of GDP in developing countries, any percentage decrease in agricultural productivity results in a much greater relative loss in income than in other countries. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates average costs of over 5 per cent of GDP per large disaster in low-income countries between 1997 and 2001. IPCC scenarios indicate that a warming of 23 degrees across the globe is likely within the next 50 years largely the result of greenhouse gases already in the Earth's atmosphere and secondary effects already in train. Thereafter, levels of potential warming are likely to be significantly influenced by the levels of greenhouse gas we emit over the coming years. Such scenarios predict rising sea levels to threaten large cities in Africa and the densely populated river deltas of the Ganges and Mekong. Glacier melting is likely to disrupt water supplies in Asia and Latin America.

Impact on livelihoods of people in India: People in India, especially the poorest, are very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, mainly because the nation's economy is so closely tied to natural resources. For example, more than 56% of workers are engaged in agriculture and allied sectors, while many others earn their living in coastal areas through tourism or fishing. Most of India's poorest people live in rural areas, almost totally reliant on natural resources for their food, shelter and incomes. They are already experiencing the impacts of climate change, with few resources to cope with. There are many climate-related problems that people in India are already facing, such as diminishing water resources and frequent natural disasters. Climate change will aggravate these existing problems

Climate change and gender: Women are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. For instance, climate change causes a rise in the sea level, affecting the fishing community (both men and women) not only in terms of



## Children Charter on Climatic Justice

fish-catch but also with regard to water scarcity, as seawater gets into fresh water. Besides, when the land is inundated, infrastructure (roads and houses) is damaged. Large scale migration from inundated areas is expected and much of the burden of migration falls on women. Water resources - shortage and access: Climate change may exacerbate existing shortages of water. Women are largely responsible for water collection in their communities and are therefore more affected when the quantity of water and its accessibility changes. Increased burden of care giving: As primary caregivers, women may see their responsibilities increase as family members suffer increased illness due to exposure to vector borne diseases such as malaria, water borne diseases such as cholera and increased in heart stress mortality.

Climate change affects MDG: There is now clear evidence that climate change will adversely impact the achievement of MDG 1. The Stern Review found that failure to address climate change could lead to huge reductions in the welfare of people across the world. This would mean, for example, cuts in global per capita consumption of 520 per cent now and forever under a business-as-usual scenario. These impacts could be on a scale similar to those associated with World Wars I and II and the economic depression of the 1930s. As a result of climate change, there will be an increasing risk of shocks and potential tipping points. It will be difficult or impossible to reverse these changes.

Climate change will have an overall adverse impact on livelihoods, and hence on all MDGs relating to children, including health, education and gender equality. Impacts on livelihoods can be expected to be sudden, such as droughts and floods, or slower but cumulative. Falling agricultural output and deteriorating conditions in rural areas caused by climate change will increase directly the poverty of households in poor countries. Developing countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America are forecast to see reductions in agricultural productivity of between 5 and 25 per cent by the 2080s due to climate



change. (Climate change affects achievement of MDG 1)

Climate Change and Children: Children have the absolute right to live in a decent environment with all that implies: attending school, enjoying good health and living and growing in safety. This is not simply a moral assertion. It is codified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) the world's most widely ratified human rights treaty. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and WFFC declaration oblige signatory nations to protect the right of every child to a safe, healthy environment in which to develop and grow and to recognize them as resourceful citizens, capable of helping to build a better future for all, in accordance with their age and maturity.

However it is the fact that today's children and future generations bear the greatest burden of climate change impacts. There is an increasingly convincing body of evidence that many of the main killers of children (malaria, diarrhea and under nutrition) are highly sensitive to climatic conditions. These are expected to worsen as a result of climate change. Compared to adults, children are more susceptible to the adverse effects of environmental degradation, because of their physical, cognitive and physiological immaturity. They are therefore more vulnerable to adverse environmental conditions, such as poor air quality, contaminated water and extreme heat. Children are also psychologically more sensitive to sudden disruptions of their lives caused by forced migration and natural disasters.

Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development were adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. Principle 10 of the declaration, which states "environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level," has played an important role in fostering

## Children Charter on Climatic Justice

connections between human rights and environmental agendas at the national level. UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2003, report suggests that Children and young people can be meaningfully engaged through more participatory approaches to community research and development. There are many excellent examples of children getting involved in local research that would otherwise be impossible to conduct. It also suggests that for children to become effective agents of change avenues must exist for their knowledge to be translated into advocacy and action. Programmes and policies that take children's perspectives into account from the outset can produce better results for everyone concerned. The literature review reveals that:

- Climate change is an important and global issue that poses a major threat to human security and failure to address the issue will make irreparable loss to human development.
- Though climate change has no boundaries, developing countries are the worst affected due to its impact
- Climate change is increasingly becoming one of the major impediments in achieving all MDG1 as it adversely impact the livelihoods.
- Children, who has every right to live in a safe and secured environment are more susceptible to the adverse impact of climate change due to their physical, and psychological immaturity
- The vulnerable communities, who are the least contributors to global warming, but the most affected due its impact, have no say in policy decisions as they were not given ample opportunities to present their views.



# Significance of Study



It is clearly evident that climate change is an issue posing a great challenge to human development. All countries, particularly developing countries are already suffering due to its adverse impact. Millions are already facing hunger, disease, migration, water & sanitation problems and resource conflict due to climate change. Most vulnerable communities and their children, whose livelihood are entirely depending on natural resources, such as farmers, farm labourers, fishermen, tribals (forest dwellers) etc, are the worst sufferers. There is an urgent need to take actions building resilience to climate change, mitigating the green house emissions, and making these communities adapt to the effects of climate change.

The policies and protocols are being formulated at national and international level with poor understanding of ground realities. Many studies revealed that the local people should be consulted and their voices should be heard as they have plentiful knowledge on the environmental issues. However, there is currently no system or official processes in place to harness the views, voices, and priorities of these most vulnerable communities and their children. This gap emphasis on the need to how best the policies and actions can be formulated and implemented in a participatory manner which is relevant and appropriate to local conditions.

This study aims to address this gap by gathering information on the communities' and children' perception about climate change, the impact on their livelihood and standard of living, mitigation and adaptation strategies being followed by them and their recommendations/suggestions for the policy makers. This study intends to contribute to evolve a policy framework that are community centered, incorporating the views and concerns of most affected vulnerable communities.

Though the study is not very wide in terms of geographic coverage, the depth of issues studied is expected to create a good positive impact among the policy makers.





# Objectives and methodologies



The specific objective of this study is to understand how rural communities and their children, across different agro-climatic zones, perceive climate change, its impact on their livelihood as well as overall quality of life, impact on children and their expectations/demands to policy makers

Towards this, the study has framed the following research questions

1. What are the observable/felt changes by the communities over a period of time affecting their livelihood as well as quality of life?
2. What are the influential and background factors causing such changes?
3. How such changes have affected their life, especially its impact on children
4. What do they expect/what are their demands to policy makers to address those issues

## Scope of the study:

The study covered three southern districts, where SPEECH and their networked NGOs have field presence, in Tamil Nadu, India. The focus of the study was to understand the perception of rural communities and their children on the impact of climate change in their livelihood and overall quality of life. Hence the study was designed to capture mostly qualitative changes regard to the impact areas with little focus on magnitude and extent of changes. Considering the focus of research and types of information to be collected, the study mainly used Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques which were supported by semi-structured interviews and case studies.

## Methodology:

The PRA techniques mainly used were social & resource mapping, timeline & trend changes, seasonal analysis, occupational transition map, and problem tree. Semi structured interviews and case studies were also conducted wherever appropriate. The study was conducted in nine locations across six different livelihood regions viz. dry land agriculture, river basin agriculture, forest, salt pans, fisheries and industrial belts, in three southern districts of Tamil Nadu, India.

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<sup>7</sup> a district is an administrative unit within a state.



# Study Framework



The framework developed for the study and the information checklist are given below in a pictorial diagram

Children & Climate Change - Study Framework						
Objective	Understand how rural communities and their children perceive climate change, understand its impact on them, coping strategies and their demands					
Key Research Questions	<p>What is the impact (current and potential) of climatic vagaries/ changes on the lives and livelihoods of the people in rural areas, particularly children?</p> <p>Specific study questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the level of awareness of communities and their children on climate change, its effects and adaptation measures?</li> <li>- How has the climatic changes affected their day to day lives, livelihoods and quality of life overall?</li> <li>- How mitigation and adaptation strategies are being followed by them to tackle adverse effects of climate change?</li> <li>- What do they expect/what are their demands from others including government.</li> </ul>					
Analysis of findings with respect to study questions in line with						
What is in CRC	Adequate nutritious food, Access to education, and clean drinking water, health and nutrition right to survival, life	Adequate nutritious food, promotion of child rights to life and survival	Protection of children from any form of discrimination, best interest of the child, right to life, survival			
What is in MDG	Reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other	Achieve universal primary education	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Ensure environmental sustainability		
Methodology and tools	Desk review (through web), PRA using social & resource mapping, timeline & trend changes, seasonal analysis, occupational transition map, venn diagram, SSIs, case studies					
PRA Tools	Social and resource mapping	Timeline and Trend changes	Seasonal analysis	Occupational Transition Map	Venn diagram	Cons. And Trialing Meetings
Information to be captured past and present	List of livelihood resources (past and present), factors influencing livelihood resources, livelihood related policy regulations, availability and access to common property resources	List of livelihood resources (pas. and present), factors influencing livelihood resources, livelihood policy related regulations, health (disease prevalence, nutritional status of children, food habits, food security (availability, dependency), sanitation facilities), Pollution (air and water pollution, related changes in lifestyles), Inconsistency in climate pattern - occurrence, effects, mitigation, adaptation, projection of imp. after 10 yrs	Seasonal changes rainfall (frequency, intensity, quality), temperatures, ground water availability and quality	Changes in occupational pattern - past and present, occupational hazards, risks	Access to drinking water, health and educational facilities, Availability and access to common property resources, Level of CSOs response - PRIs,	Responsibilities of communities, children, CSOs and govt. to tackle the crisis  Case studies - individuals, activity groups (agri, fishing, saltworkers, livestock keepers etc)

# Sampling



## Sampling:

The universe of the study was blocks in all the study districts. The secondary unit of the sampling was study locations covering villages of rain-fed agriculture, river basin, industrial belts, forest, and coastal regions within the selected blocks. The primary unit of the samples was communities, both men and women and children dwelling in these villages.

## Number and selection of study locations:

Based on the resources availability it was decided to select fourteen blocks from three study districts. The study team worked on the sampling criteria and decided to select blocks covering different agro-eco zones and livelihood pattern within these districts. Based on the working experience and the presence of network NGOs of SPEECH two locations each from rain-fed agriculture, forest, coastal, salt pans, river basins, sand dunes, and industrial belts were selected. The name of the study locations and the timeline are given below in the picture.

Study disis.	Virudhunagar			Tuticorin			Trinakeveli		
Sampling criteria	Agro climatic zones and Livelihood pattern & Regulations								
Zones	Rainfed	Mountains	Industrial	Salt pans	Coastal	Industrial	River basin	Sand dune	Rainfed
No of study locations	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1
Respondent profile	Socio economic, occupation, assets holding etc								
Fieldwork Schedule	29th July to 1st Aug 09			20th to 24 Aug 09			7th to 11th Aug 09		

## Field processes:

As explained earlier, the study emphasis was placed on qualitative approaches mainly using participatory rural appraisal techniques followed by semi-structured interviews. In addition, most significant changes methodology, informal focused discussions, and case studies were adopted wherever possible and appropriate. The overall study process and field work processes are given below.

*Block An administrative unit within a district to carry out development works*



# Field Process



Field Processes	Participants/Respondents	Outcome / Info collected
<b>Study Process</b>		
Inception workshop at SPEECH office	An inception workshop was organized and attended by representatives from SPEECH, RCPDS, VRUTTI, Children Facilitators, and other study team members	Study framework was designed; research areas, methodologies, and tools were discussed and decided; timeline and resources for the study were finalized
Orientation workshop for the children facilitators and study team members	An orientation workshop was conducted and attended by children facilitators and other study members. Representatives from RCPDS and VRUTTI were the facilitators	Study team were introduced to climate changes and its impact; they were oriented on study design, methodologies, information to be collected, PRA tools, and do's and don'ts on the field
Pilot testing	A pilot study was conducted at SPEECH premises with all study team members actively participated in the process. Nearby communities were brought for the purpose	Hands on experience to study team members in facilitating PRA techniques; few tools which were found to be unfit was taken out and new techniques were included at the end of the day; a detailed itinerary was worked out for field work
<b>Field Process</b>		
Rapport Building	General communities and their children in the target locations, SHG members, Panchayat representatives, NGO representatives	Won the confidence of the communities and children; briefing on study purpose and methods and created an enabling environment for the information collection process
Selection of location, members for the group work (PRA techniques)	NGO representatives, SHG members, Panchayat members, village leaders	A good mix of respondents (different profile - occupation, gender, age) required for different exercises selected; Identified convenient and suitable locations to execute the exercises
Orientation on study to respondents	Respondents selected for the group exercises which includes men, women, youth and children	Respondents became aware of study purpose, methodologies and information to be collected through the process
Execution of study techniques	Respondents selected for the group exercises which includes men, women, youth and children	Required information collected through various process [see PRA tools in study framework]; Pictures/Maps drawn by communities
Final village level meeting	All respondents	Collected information shared, triangulated and consolidated; Collective reflection on findings and recommendations suggested by the respondents



# Study Team



## Study team:

Well qualified researchers and children facilitators with proven experience in participatory rural appraisal methods, were involved as field investigators and documenters in field teams. All the researchers were graduates having working knowledge of gathering information from the informants by using participatory techniques. Gender balance was also ensured while constituting the field teams. After selecting the field researchers and children facilitators, intensive orientation was provided on climate change, global and national scenario, study purpose, methodologies, tools & techniques, do's & don'ts, and study protocols. After orientation, the members were teamed into study groups for information collection.

Five percentage more than that of the required investigators were selected and trained to tackle any turn-over during the field work. The field researchers were also closely watched during the process in the first study location [Tiruchuli] and provided inputs to hone their facilitation and documenting skills. All the core team members' viz. study advisors, team coordinators and field team leaders have more than a decade experience in conducting research particularly related to situation assessment studies with community participation.

## Limitations:

Though it was well briefed at the start, the communities in few study locations perceived that the purpose of research was to recommend to the government for freebies and subsidiary schemes and hence few of their recommendations fall in this line. These were clarified by the study team at the research locations itself and those out-of-focus recommendations were taken out.

There were issues related to selection of desired profile of communities and their children at study locations due to varied occupational pattern, work nature and timings. However, the study team was flexible to ensure coverage of communities as expected by reaching out to the site early morning as well as stay back even eleventh hour.



# Key Findings



The chapter presents the key finding of the study from all the location across the study regions. The findings presented here are a synthesis of information collected across locations regard to the specific research questions. Given the large list of issues probed and number of techniques used in every location, the detailed findings are not given here, as they related to nine independent case studies. Yet, these findings at each location are compiled as location specifics case studies and are available for reference. However location specific examples, anecdotes used by communities, brief case studies have been highlighted at appropriate pages throughout this chapter. To make the document reader friendly, these synthesized findings are organized and presented region-wise.



Deriving from the study framework, the key findings from the study bring together evidences based on experiences of the communities in each of the areas, i.e. the climate change areas, the domains that are affected and the kind of effects due to these changes, the underlying factors and the overall effect on children. The changes observed and felt by the communities and their children with respect to their livelihood resources, climatic conditions, lifestyle pattern etc. over a period of 40 years (the years from 1970 to 2009) were captured.

The communities in the study area are largely poor, with either landless labourers or marginal land owners. Major livelihood options have been dry-land agriculture, salt pan work, fisheries, and work in industries in nearby areas. Access to services is limited and most have very few livelihood options to choose from. Given their asset base and linkages, the fall back mechanisms in case of any shocks and disasters have been extremely limited.

### Key Causal Factors for Shrinking Agriculture

- ☛ Frequent failure of monsoon
- ☛ Inconsistent and insufficient rainfall and sometime heavy precipitation
- ☛ Lack of maintenance of water harvesting structures
- ☛ High use of inorganic fertilizers, over exploitation of ground water

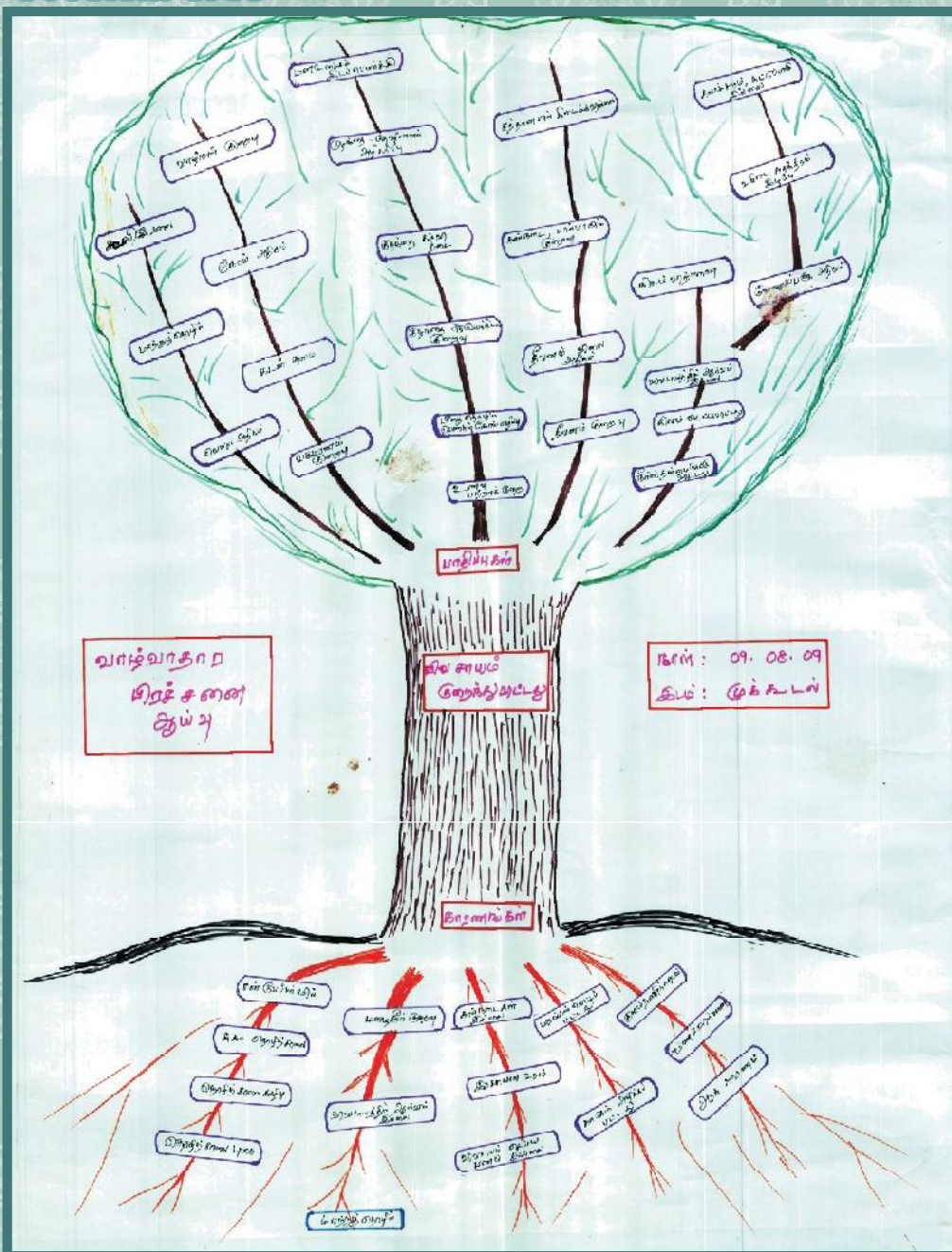


### The key changes reported by these communities with respect to livelihoods are:

#### (a) Agriculture Rainfed and River basin:

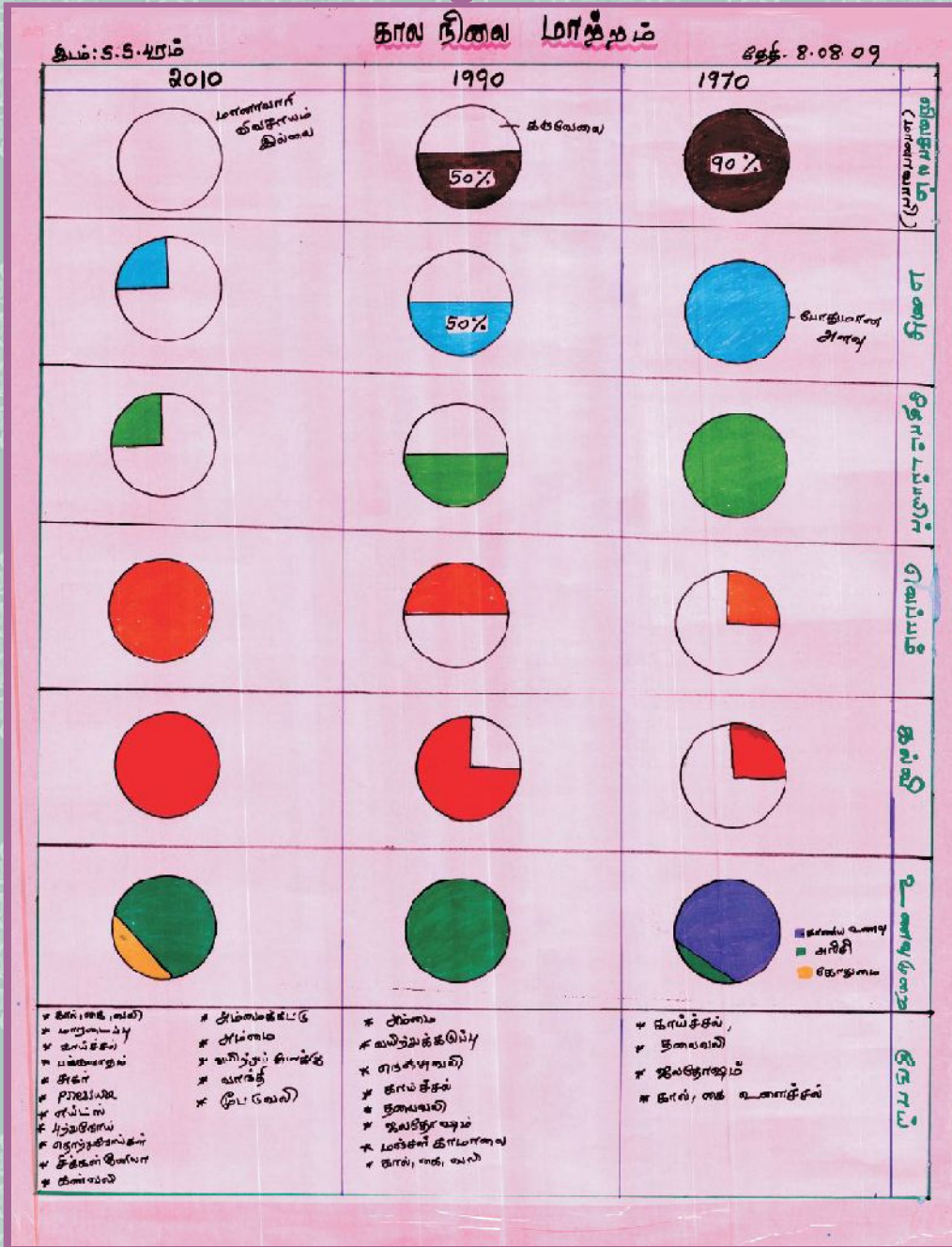
Increasing trend of erratic and reduced quantum/ poor distribution of rainfall has been reported in all the locations. Shrinkage in the area under agriculture (about 70% reduction) due to shortage of rainfall and low productive soils, forcing farmers to use cultivable lands for other purposes such growing acacia, establishment of industries (number of industries in the area have gone up to 4,000 from 200), sale for habitations or keep them as barren lands. Increased use of inorganic fertilizer and pesticides, diminished use of traditional seed varieties, extinction of water harvesting structures, over exploitation of ground water for non agricultural purposes, erosion of top soil minerals due to lack of adequate green cover, trend of shift from traditional, organic and integrated farming practices, reduction in livestock and small ruminant population were reported as key changes affecting livelihoods. As far day to day life goes, communities are concerned about the reduction in number of days of employment in agriculture, leading to reduction in income and increasing seasonal migration. Temperature rise, shortage of potable drinking water, scarcity of food leading to changes in food habits are also issues of concern to them. This condition makes the life of women and children more miserable as it is perceived as their responsibility to fetch water for the house.

### Problem Tree





### Timeline and Trend changes



### (b) Forest based livelihoods:

Here again, reduction in and erratic rainfall and illegal and excessive tree felling have contributed to decreasing trend of forest produce, reduced numbers of water sources [Sunai], gradual lowering of ground water table, decreasing trend of birds, animals, flies, absence of green cover, and frequent occurrence of floods. Added to this, the recent Government order in the area announcing the forest as squirrel sanctuary forced tribal population to move out of the area. This has created a major impact on their livelihood as well as their quality of life. As a result, now the forest area wears a deserted look and there are only very few resources available including water, which put the communities and wild animals in peril. The communities are forced to work in farm lands owned by landlords as daily labourers for unreasonably low wages. Even this farm work is not available for them throughout the year, but limited to horticultural crop seasons only. They find it extremely difficult to meet the ends with the meager amount earned through wage work. Few families had already left the village for want of better jobs. This precarious

situation worsens the conditions of children in this village even more pathetic. In addition, the communities and their children are also facing threats from wild animals as the animals frequently move down to foothills for want of drinking water. A couple of days before the study was done in the location, a community forest watcher was killed by an elephant.

Kottai, a tribal, aged 85 explained during the PRA exercise, the types of food crops available from the forest and its medical benefits. He strongly believes the food practices that were being followed during his childhood days are the main reason for his healthy state, despite his old age. He said that he had never visited any hospital for ill-health, but would take proper food to overcome.

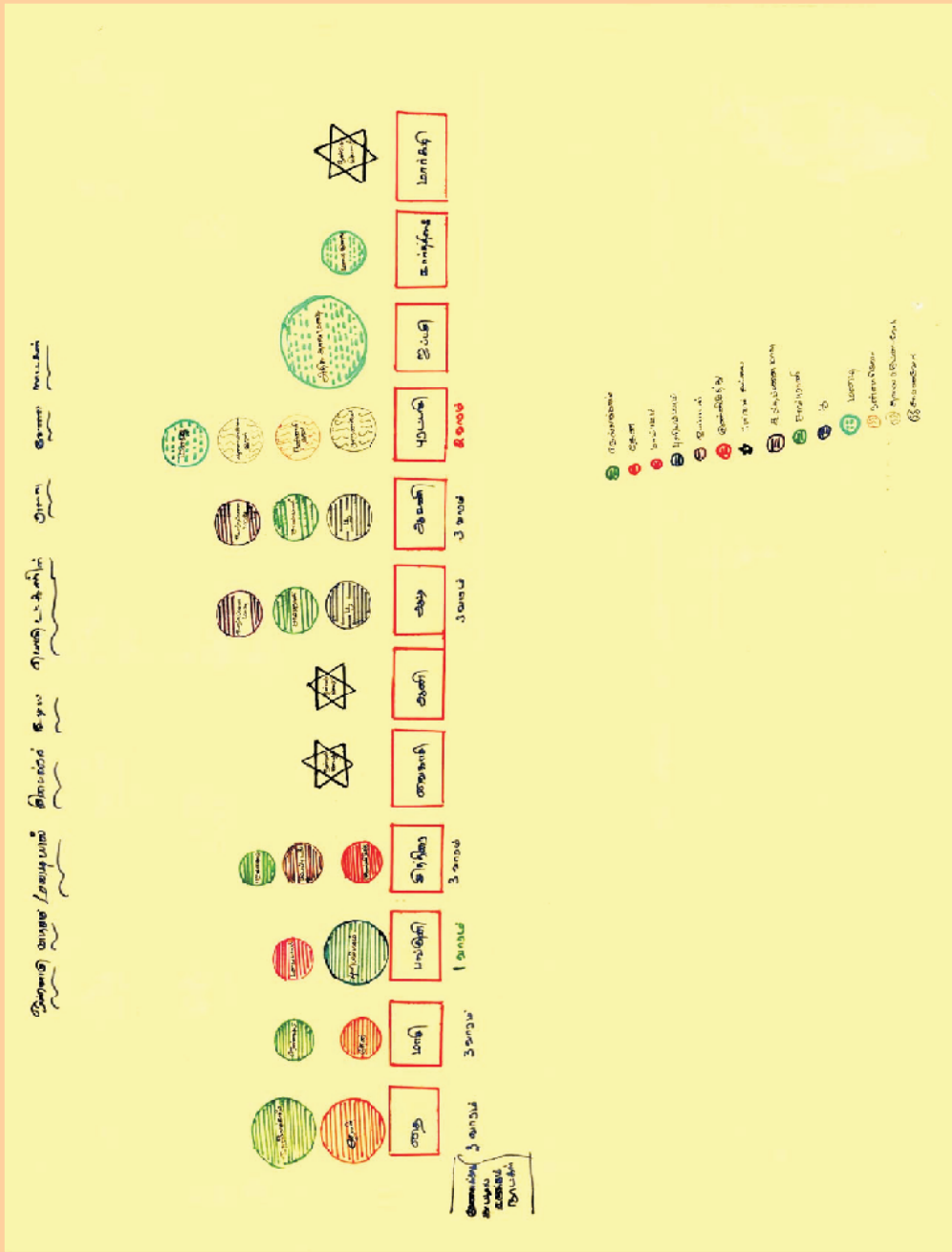








### Seasonal analysis



**(c) Salt Pan Workers:**

Salt pan workers are predominantly migrated marginal communities. They have been into this industry for several decades. The salt production pattern has undergone changes over the years. These changes have adversely affected the life and livelihood of salt pan workers. The study finds that the major changes among the marginal salt producers and salt pan workers with respect to their livelihood resources as poor quality of salt water, decreasing trend of availability of salt water in bore wells, low and poor quality of salt production, increasing trend of lands sold to industries, increasing trend of converting salt pan lands as godown, frequent occurrence of flood causing damages to salt pans, and increased production cost. Work drudgery (work under scorching sun), reduced number of employment days, reduced income, women and adolescents withdrawing from salt work, unbearable heat in habitats, air and water pollutions, shortage and poor quality of drinking water, high occurrence of air and water borne diseases,

Hundreds of thousands of palm trees surrounding our region had been cut for favouring industrial growth. Rainfall, temperature, and wind pattern have been significantly changed due to this

fear of factory wastes have been reported as changes in the quality of life. Erratic wind, rain and temperature, the people report, that affect the quality and quantum of production of salt; also the industrial wastes mixed in sea.



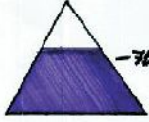









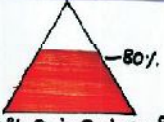


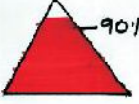



## Occupational Transition

வாழ்வாதார ஆதாரங்களின் நிலைகள்

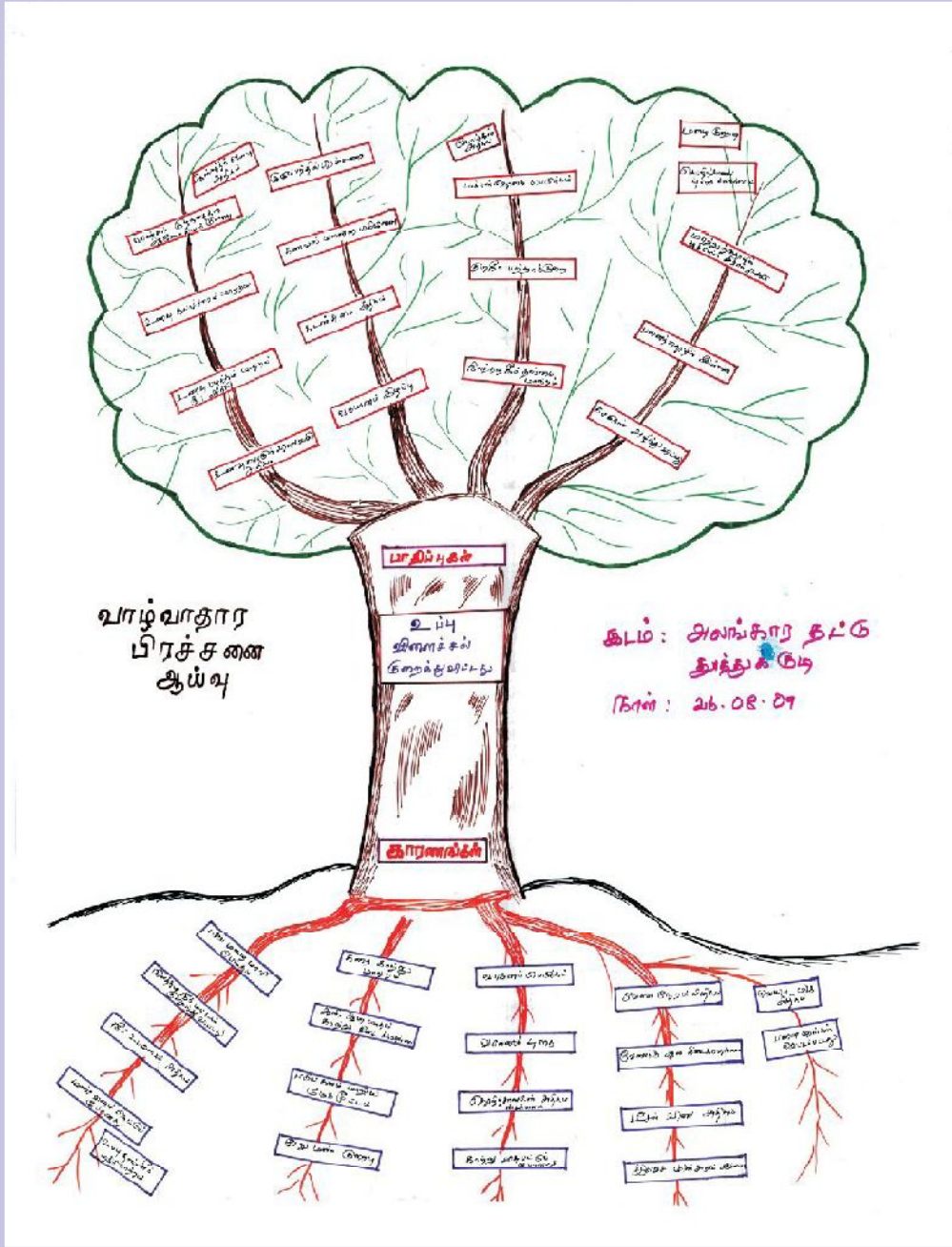
கிடம்: அலங்காரக் திட்டம்.

நாள்:- 26.8.09

2010	1990	1970	
 -40%	 -60%	 -75%	உய்யும்
 -15%	 -20%	 -75%	மீள்பிடி பெறும்
 -75%	 -50%	 -25%	மீள் நியாயம்
 -50%	 -25%	 -10%	உடைய பெறும்
 -80%			த கட்டுகள்
 -75%	 -25%		கூடுதல் கட்டுகள்
 -90%	 -25%		உய்யும் பெறும்



### Problem Tree



### (d) Fisheries:

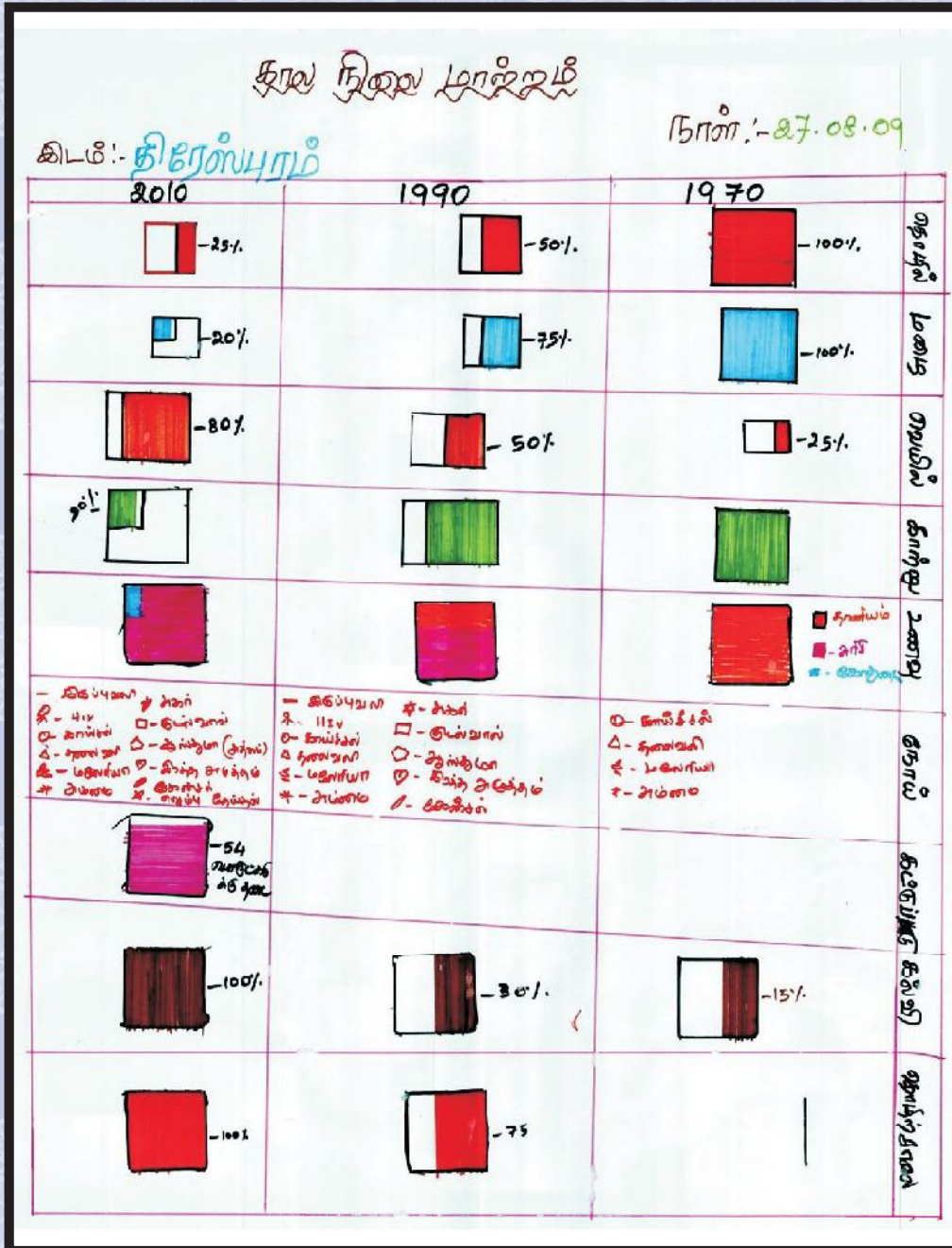
The fishing communities live closer to the shore and have been traditionally skilled only in fishing and have been dependent solely on fishing for their livelihood.. They are not trained or skilled for any other livelihood. Changes in the behaviour of the sea particularly in the post Tsunami era is posing major threats to their livelihood. The observable changes as felt by the fishermen communities with respect to their livelihood and quality of life have been unpredictable sea behaviour [rough and calm], reduction in fish wealth, diminishing trend of fish species, unpredictability of fish catch, sea pollution, fear of fishing after tsunami, loss of livelihood for sea divers, shell collectors and reduced number of sea ventures. However, among all the study locations, this is the only occupation where people have not moved out significantly despite disturbances in their livelihood resources. The changes with respect to their quality of life have

been reported as fear of more disasters and hence fear of fishing, reduction in income, acute shortage of drinking water, air and water borne diseases. Other factors for these changes are again the development policies and coastal management zone regulations of government. Though at present there isn't any major damage to the livelihood resources, communities fear that projects like Sethu Ship Canal Project would cause serious adverse implications. However the uniqueness seen by the study among these communities is their ability to unite and fight against common cause. This could probably be one of the reasons for insignificant occupational shift among the population. For instance, the coastal regulation zone recommendations, which posed a serious threat to their livelihood, have been set aside by the government because of the collective pressure put by the communities










## Timeline and Trend changes



## Livelihood Resources mapping

வாழ்வாதார ஆதாரங்கள்

நாள் - 27. 8. 09 அடம்: தீவிரம் புரம்

	மினி பிடித்தொழில் →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* கடல் அருகில் உள்ளது</li> <li>* உட்கு தயாரித்தல்</li> <li>* கூலி ஆட்கள் அங்கம்</li> <li>* உணவு அருகில் கிடைக்கின்றது</li> <li>* சீக்கை</li> <li>* உறவுகூட்டு</li> </ul>
	சங்கு தொழில் →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* சங்கு அங்கம்</li> <li>* கூலி ஆட்கள்</li> <li>* வியாபாரம் உள்ளது</li> <li>* உணவு (தயாரிப்பு தொழில்)</li> <li>* உறவுகூட்டு</li> </ul>
	ஊஸ் கம்பியை →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* மினி அங்கம்</li> <li>* மினி உற்பத்தி</li> <li>* ஆய்வு அங்கம்</li> <li>*</li> </ul>
	கொண்ட கம்பியை →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* அங்கமான மினி</li> <li>* கடிப்பு மினி அங்கம்</li> <li>* பெண் குழந்தைகள் உணவுகளை உற்பத்தி செய்கிறார்கள் (16 டி &amp; 1)</li> <li>* ஆய்வு அங்கம்</li> <li>* தொழில் சான்று உள்ளது.</li> </ul>
	கணவாய் கம்பியை } →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* தொழில் சான்று உள்ளது.</li> <li>* 16 டி &amp; 1 உயர்நிலை உணவுகளை உற்பத்தி செய்கிறார்கள்</li> <li>* அங்கமான கணவாய் மினி</li> <li>* உறவுகூட்டு</li> </ul>

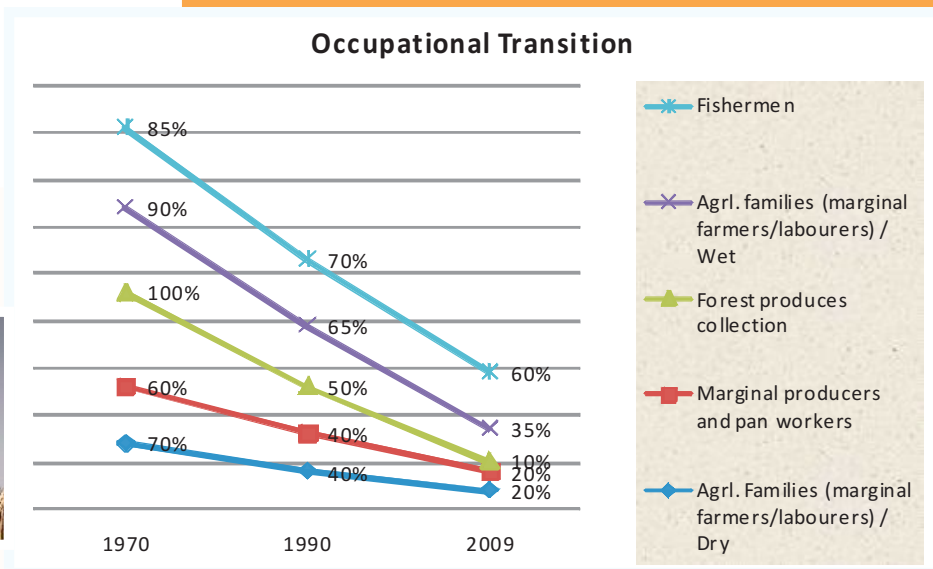


**(e) Industrial area:**

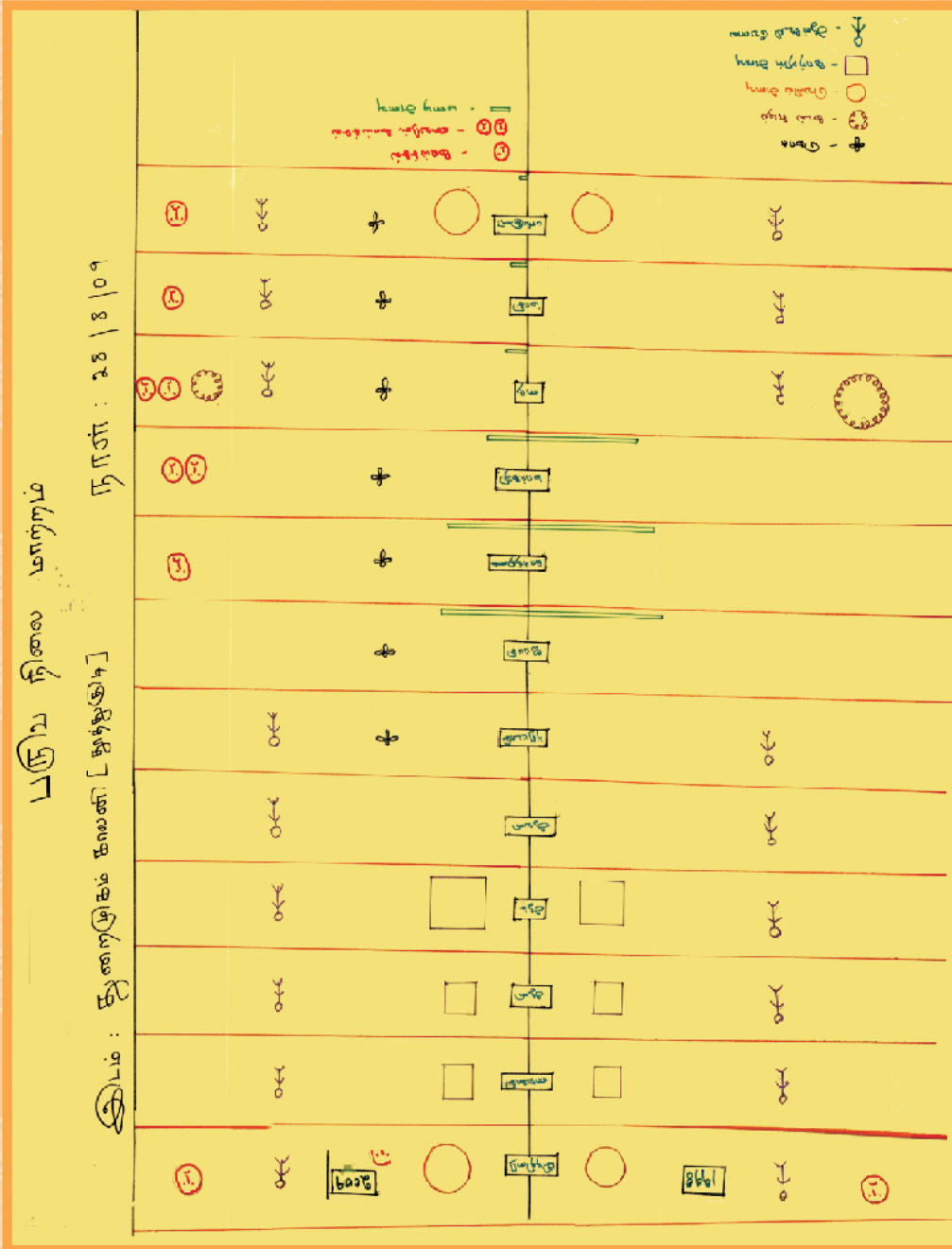
As far as industrial regions are concerned, there has been a consistent increase in livelihood resources due to mushrooming of small, medium and big industries. In-migration has been witnessed in all the industrial regions mainly due to demand in the labour market. However, changes have been felt by the communities with respect to their quality of life and reported as air, noise and water pollution, drinking water scarcity, poor quality of water, poor sanitation facilities and high incidences of air and water borne diseases. Women, working as daily wages in Port Trust reported that skin, eye and respiratory problems are quite common for them as they are not given any protective appliances and equipments. However, these equipments are provided to and used by regular employees of the trust. The factors that cause these changes as reported by the communities are increasing



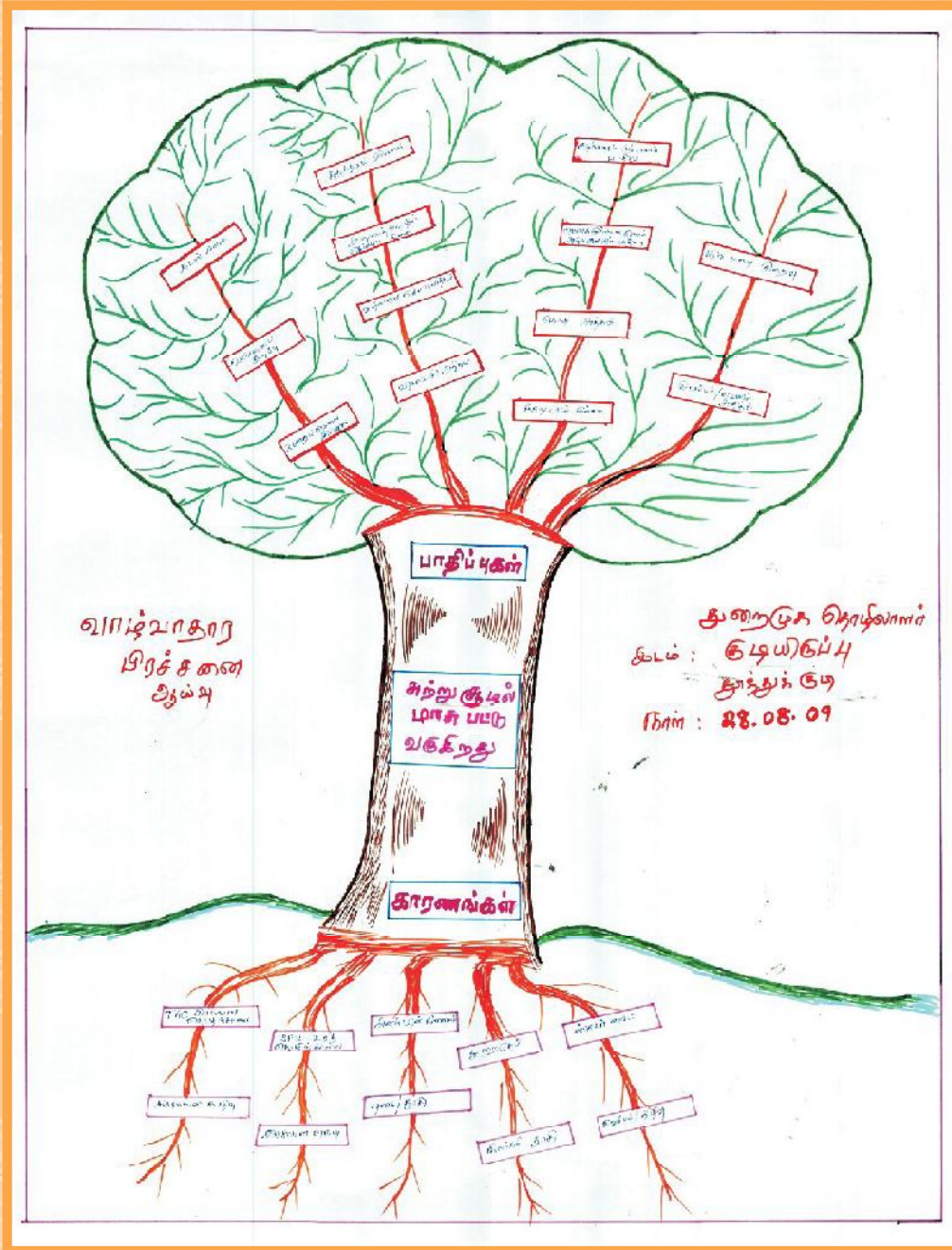
population of industries in the region, over exploitation of ground water by these industries, poor monitoring of safety and security standards and waste disposal protocols being followed by the industries. The industrial policies of government, and weak monitoring mechanisms to verify standard compliances by these industries add to these problems.



## Seasonal analysis



### Problem Tree





**(f) Overall, the key changes that have been experienced by communities in the livelihood area are:**

- ✿ Drastic reduction in livelihood resources such as cultivable lands and traditional seeds in the case of agriculture, lands and good quality water for salt production in the case of salt workers, forest produce in the case of hilly regions, fish wealth, pearls and shells in the case of coastal regions. The marginalized families who are depending on these resources for their livelihood are greatly affected.
- ✿ Low productivity and reduced number of employment days (agriculture, forest, salt, fish) from all traditional income sources except in industrial region, affecting marginal and small producers and workers depending on these occupations.
- ✿ Reduced income, increased credit burden, credit from informal sources for huge interest rates, difficulties in repaying the credit reported; Dependency on others for their livelihood and hence exploitation also have increased as effect of these.

- ✿ Women and children are forced to go for work as the traditional earnings are not sufficient to meet the ends. Children are dropped out of schools and denied to further their studies. Women are overburdened as they have to do work other than household chores; Children are not properly given care as both the parents have to work for the family survival
- ✿ Availability and quality of drinking water decreases and forcing women and children to fetch water from long distances; sometimes force them to buy water @ rate of Rs 2 per pot [reported by salt pan workers, Tuticorin]
- ✿ Dwelling places (habitats, villages) have become increasingly unsuitable for living due to extreme hot and cold conditions, particularly affecting the marginalized that live in houses that are not fully covered.
- ✿ Occurrences as well as fear of future disasters such as drought, flood, cyclones make every day life a nightmare for these communities



### **Impact of these changes on quality of life of Communities:**

Moving further on, the study captured the impact of these changes on the lives and the quality of communities, with special emphasis on children. These are explained below:

#### **(a) Occupation Transition and Migration:**

The study has found that in at least 50% families who were earlier dependent on their traditional occupation have moved out and or have diversified their income sources through alternate options the communities and children in most of the study locations [other than industrial region]. Though there are many reasons for this occupational shift, all of them are either directly or indirectly linked to climate change, the main causative factor affecting their livelihood resources. Marginal and small farmers who are unable to do cultivation in their small piece of lands due to acute water shortage because of scanty rainfall, have sold their lands to landlords and industrialists and have sifted to other occupations. The agriculture labourers, due to reduced number of employment days in agriculture and little scope for recovery, now have turned out to be daily wagers working in construction, fireworks,

match factories and brick kilns in nearby areas. The risks and health hazards they face in these occupations are manifold. Women who earlier worked in salt pans along with their husbands have now turned out to be beedi rollers and some are working in bouquet making units due to high temperatures and changing wind intensity and directions affecting their health and productivity. The pazhia tribals, living in the forest areas of Sivilliputhur, who once independently led their life, are now depending on others to survive due to lack of forest resources on account of government regulations and subsequent climate implications. This occupational shift among the communities has brought many life style changes and significantly affect their quality of life, particularly that of children. This finding support the findings of other similar studies that suggest world's most poor rely directly on natural resources for their livelihoods including agriculture, forest, fisheries have been the worst affected.



**(b) Change in life-style:**

Due to occupational shift and migration, the communities who were once self dependent in their life, now have become dependent on others for various requirements. Reduced income coupled with increased expenditures on health care, education, water etc. force them to avail credit from informal sources for higher interest rates with difficult repayment conditions. For credit, they approach either their employer or other sources [Kanthu Vatti] and are becoming bonded to them lifelong. Many of them reported to be continuously in the debt trap and give away a significant portion of their earning as interest. Sometimes, when the main bread winner leaves the village; put the family into untold trouble. In some cases, the women and children have been forced to go for work for the survival of their family.

Changes in food practices over the years were reported in all study locations. The respondents, particularly elders from farming communities reported that there were about 25 varieties of millets, pulses and cereals predominantly cumbu, cholam, ragi and thinai available during their childhood days [around 1970]. They had been cultivating all these millets in their own lands and used to keep a portion of

it for a year for consumption purpose and the excess used to sell in the market. They reported that they used to be very strong and healthy both physically and psychologically during that time mainly because of consuming these nutritious rich food products. However in due course most of these millets have disappeared and the only food being eaten now-a-days is rice purchased through public distribution system. For tribals, traditionally the main food had been the tuber crops, vegetables and greens they fetch from the forest. Since they are now not being allowed to enter into the forest, rice through PDS is the only available option for them too. Elders both men and women across locations echoed similar voices and stated that food practices were the major reason for their healthy body and mind. They felt that only because of these healthy food habits, the incidences of ill-health had been very low during earlier times. The study finds that the food practices have significantly changed over the period of forty years and currently rice is the only major food for consumption by people in all regions. This has lot of implications in their day to day life and it is perceived as the main reason for frequent ill-health, poor immunity.





### (c) Health:

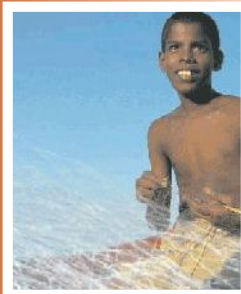
The study has found that the health conditions of these marginalized have worsened due to changes in climatic conditions such as rainfall and temperature. These changes have serious implications and make the communities vulnerable to diseases. The study also found that there has been increasing trend in the incidences of new diseases [chicken guniyya, swine flu etc.] as well as the prevalence of common diseases. A significant portion of their income has been reported to be spent for health care.

### Impact of these changes on Children:

#### (a) Health:

Children, who are healthy physically and emotionally, are better equipped to face any challenges in life. The MDG [goals 4 to 6] relating to health aims to reduce by two thirds the mortality rate of children under the age of five, reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio, and halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Article 6 of UNCRC states that 'children have the right to live, and governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily'. Article 24 states that 'children have the right to good quality health care the best health care possible to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a dean and safe environment and

information to help them stay healthy. In all the study locations irrespective of regions and livelihood options the communities reported that 'Children health status has been deteriorating'. Though there are many reasons said to be the causes, all are attributed to changes in climate. While the health of children in industrial regions are affected due to temperature change and pollution which cause non-communicable diseases such as cardio-respiratory, asthma, heat stroke etc., it is said predominantly that desertification, flood and increased temperature are the reasons for communicable diseases such as malaria, chicken guniyya, swine flu, diarrhea etc in non industrial regions. The incidences and the prevalence of respiratory problems among school going children are reported to be high in the settlement of Tuticorin Port Trust. Infant mortality is reported to be high among tribal communities. There is high prevalence of malnourished children among the communities in regions other than the industrial belts due to food insecurity. The availability and quality of drinking water and sanitation facilities have been reported to be of poor across all regions due to over exploitation and industrial wastes.



**(b) Education:**

Right to education is the foremost necessity for a child as it plays a vital role in deciding his/her future. Children who are deprived of this basic right are for whatever reasons stamped as unskilled labour and have to face unemployment as well as underemployment and hence food insecurity problems lifelong. Article 28 of UNCRC states 'All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free'. As explained in the earlier chapters, occupational transition and migration lead many children to drop their schooling. Such boys are forced to go for work and girls are forced to provide support to mothers in household chores. The incidences of children drop-outs are reported to be high in Sivakasi and Srivilliputhur blocks of Virudhunagar districts, low in coastal regions, and nil in industrial regions. The reasons for high prevalence are reported to be poor employment opportunities due to vanishing livelihood resources as well as increased demand in labour market due to industrialization.

**(c) Child Protection:**

Article 22 and 38 of UNCRC state that the children have rights to special protection and help. They have to be protected from violence, any form of abuse, trafficking and ill treatment. Child trafficking was reported by communities in the regions other than industrial workers and fishermen due to increased poverty. Children, particularly girls in the age group of 13 to 18 are being sent to Tirupur, a textile town through illegal agents. They are given false promises of food security, marriage security [Sumangali Thittam] by the employers and agents and most times they often return with empty hands. The life of children working in match factories and firework industries in Sivakasi region has also been under threat due to the work place risk as well as poor compliance of standard safety measures by the employers. Children living in coastal regions, particularly in low lying areas also face with threats of flood and cyclones. The December 2004 Tsunami has created a irreversible moral fear among children dwelling in this region.

**(d) Future Employment and Livelihood Security:**

Children have the absolute right to live in a decent environment with all that implies; attending schools, enjoying good health, living and growing in safety. However, children in the study regions reported that they may have to face severe problems of unemployment in future due to violations of their ecological rights in the form of threats to their livelihood resources. Many children opined that though industrialization would help in tackling the unemployment problem to certain extent, the development won't be sustainable as it poses major threat to their traditional livelihood and natural resources.

**(e) Child Participation in Development Processes that affect their Lives:**

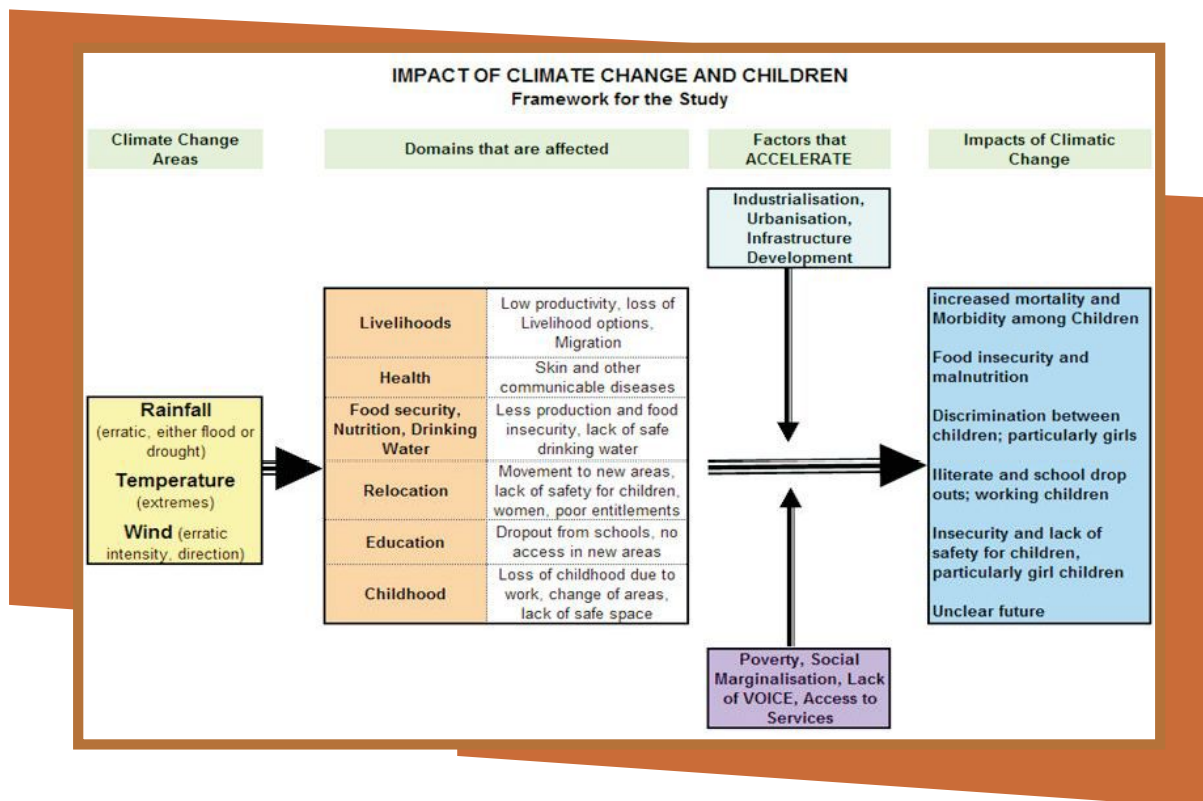
Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, and The views of the child should be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. However, the study findings reveal that in no region, there are mechanisms or systems to engage children in any decision making that affects their rights.



# Summary and Ways Forward



In short, the felt areas of climate change, the domains that are affected due to climate vagaries, factors that accelerate these changes and ultimately their impact on children are given below in a pictorial diagram.



Children are the future generations and it is important for the society to realize and address the needs and priorities of children. Children are part of their family, and their primary care takers are their parents. If the parents are not equipped to provide necessary care and support to their children, then they become vulnerable to all kinds of risks. Similarly other stakeholders should also realize the fact that any form of violation of ecological rights of children will not assure employment and income security for children in the future. As children have rights to be heard, they should be part of decision making process in matters which concern them.



From the study, it is evident that the marginalized communities, whose livelihoods depend on natural resources, have been disturbed to a large extent due to climate change crisis. Compared to earlier days, now they are not better equipped to nurture their children due to impacts on their livelihood as well as quality of life. Unless serious efforts are made to reverse such changes, these will continue to affect the communities and subsequently their children. A demand, requesting government 'to strike a balance in development policies and actions that support both existing and emerging sectors so that overall development is sustainable', has been put up by the communities through this study.

The study also reveals that there have been rapid changes in the environment across all regions that are reported as affecting their overall quality of life. Increasing temperature, poor availability and quality of drinking water, pollution and risky environment have been reported to have serious implications on their health and life style, attributed to over exploitation of resources and occupational shifts. This kind of environmental exploitations is seriously viewed by communities and their children as violation of ecological rights of children. Hence a demand to ensure 'safe and secured environment for children to grow' has been placed by the communities through this study.

Though participation is one of the four fundamental principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the study finds that in no region this has been complied. The marginalized communities and their children are often viewed by the policy makers as threats to development. The study finds that non existence of system/mechanisms to actively engage children and communities as one of the important factor that makes them further vulnerable to the impacts of climate crisis.

As conclusion, this study on behalf of the communities covered, makes a demand requesting policy makers create platforms and actively engage them including the children in decision making process in matters of concern to them.



# Children Charter on Climatic Justice

Children from Southern India

COP - 15 Copenhagen



Children convention for climate justice, Chennai 2009



Children giving their appeal to the Deputy Mayor of Chennai

Children from diverse agro ecozones of Southern India came to gather as part of the civic responsibility to view climate crisis and the efforts of many National and International forums/organizations including the UNFCCC and the impact of the same from rights perspective. Children have come out strongly with the combined opinion that none of the basic rights guaranteed in the UNCRC will not materialize unless Mother Earth is made a livable place. Vested interest, political will and greed for economic supremacy are seen as greater blocks for equitable justice. Thus children are making their strong argument for reasserting their ecological and participatory rights all levels. Children have used participatory approaches to work with their peers across the states and the findings (voices of children) circulated across the states to arrive at common vision statement. This study process was facilitated by Society for Peoples Education and Economic Change (SPEECH) through children working group was facilitated by field NGOs who are involved in ensuring child rights and partners of KNH Germany in India. The outcomes were made as children charter and presented to Government of Tamilnadu in a convention during October 09 and later at the public hearing at the national headquarters, New Delhi. On behalf of the children their signature banners and the charter were shared at the international UNFCCC meeting at Copenhagen COP 15. Children have made a head way into process of appropriate mitigation and adaptation through forming a national level network in addition to advocating their cause at the National and International forums.

# Children Charter on Climatic Justice



## Children from Southern India

## COP - 15 Copenhagen



### PREAMBLE

**WE CHILDREN** - appeal to parents, elders, community, our leaders and policy makers to kindly listen to our small but urging voices. We want to explain the issues we witnessed concerning our lives present as well future. Everyone say that we, children from all segment across the globe, have ecological rights and there are official sanctions for the same. Unfortunately we keep witnessing and experiencing adverse micro/macro environment and ecology which impose adverse effect on us as well on our families. We earnestly trust that the adults will listen to our plea from "Ecological Child Rights" perspective and assure us a better and healthy liveable earth. To concretise evidences and experiences of other children we have resorted to do a field study in identified agro eco zones with children in Tamilnadu to better understand the initiatives in other parts of the southern States of India with assistance of partners of KinderNothilfe. The results of experiences are similar across the eco zones as well the states. This makes our appeal further more valid and call for an immediate action even beyond COP 15 at the domestic and International action plans.

### WHAT DID WE DO (THE PROCESS)

We children from Virudunagar District of Tamilnadu, who have skill in the use of participatory tools came together as "Ecological Child Rights Club" a unit promoted by SPEECH/RCPDS "Palar panchayat" venture a participatory study by going round across the Sothern Districts of Tamilnadu including randomly selected villages and towns with diverse eco system, meeting with our peers, adults and some of the elected representatives to better understand or validate our experience on climate change.

Major eco systems we visited include semi arid (Virudunagar), river basin (Tirunelveli), mountainous (Dindugul) and industrialised towns (Tutucorin, Madurai). We did visual diagramming, semi structured interviews, comparative analysis using matrix tools and historical transect across neighbouring villages and districts. To our surprise our experiences with the changing climate scenario was not much different to that of other children in the district as well in the neighbourhood.







Simultaneously children from the Southern States of India Orissa, Andrapradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu wherein partners of KNH are working constituted a working group and have started a signature campaign accompanied by series of awareness building intervention across the states with their peers and other stakeholders. The signature campaign came up with more than three thousand children signing the banner wall post demanding their ecological child rights reassured.

The working groups and the champion researchers met with their outcomes at Chennai to work out their way forward measures and preparation of children charter on behalf of the multitudes of the marginalised children from depleting agro eco systems whose future

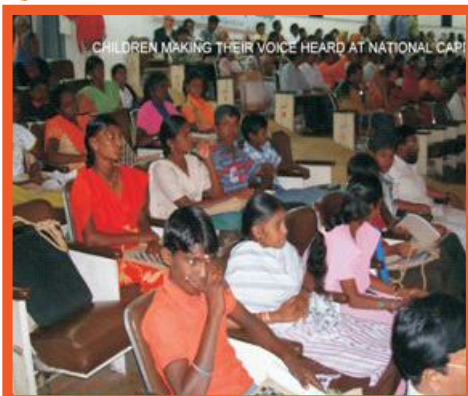
is very grim. The two days convention contributed to series of deliberations debates and consensus in framing the children charter.

The decisions and charter were presented to the Deputy Mayor of Chennai to be considered by the State representing States at the end of a human chain by more than thousand children. This demonstration attracted the attention of the general public and press who showed welcoming gesture in solidarity recognising the demands of children that were reasonable and inevitable.

Children charter moved to the next level to address the Nation in a public hearing event on climate crisis held at New Delhi, where children identified representatives made a demonstration holding the signature campaign banners in the busy streets of Delhi and presented their case to the panel members. It was categorically spelt out by the lead representative, Ms Panchavarnam, that children not only demand their ecological outside the realm but also wish to make way forward with their participation at their own levels.

Lastly the signature banner and the Children Charter had been made visible at COP 15 at Bella Centre where the official delegations and representatives of parties joined to sort out International negotiations. Thus for the first a demand process and charter from children side was placed on cards at the International negotiations.





### OUR EXPERIENCES

- ▣ We witness erratic rainfall and long months of dry spell
- ▣ We are children from remote corners of Southern states of India, very poor, marginalised from subsistence food security zones, but our agriculture scenario is rapidly changing.
- ▣ Our lands and forests which used to be our fresh traditional millet banks, fruits, roots and our summer camp areas for hands on learning have now become barren, deserted and mushroomed with thorny shrubs.
- ▣ We feel it is shame on our part for not being able to identify most of the minor millets which used to be our staple food, as we hear from our grandparents.
- ▣ Most of the lands are now owned by external factory or industrial owners whose face we do not know at all and who do not show any concern to our livelihoods.
- ▣ Our lands are thoroughly deserted (may be a wrong move of industrialisation) without even a grass cover, where to speak of a tree?
- ▣ In addition many more trees are cut, as we witness today, in the name of infrastructure development, our basic question still remains whose development? And which priority is it? Food security/sovereignty of the small and marginal farm families or forest dependent tribals or coastal dalits and fishers or just MONEY!?
- ▣ We witness our parents struggling hard to meet our family requirements which forge very adverse impact on our food habits, health and education.
- ▣ We walk miles to get a pot of protected drinking water since most of the bore holes are dried up in the recent past (year by year)
- ▣ Our ponds are completely dry, whereas these used to be our fishing centre as well swimming school learning a life skill but now no way
- ▣ Even by taking loans if parents use the land for cultivation, the inappropriate timing of monsoon showers/rains spoils the crop make our efforts a futile one. We literally do not have anything to eat proudly as a product from our land. We feel it is self humiliation on our part to live at the mercy of subsidies and ration supply while we own a rightful natural resource of ours.



- ❑ Our parents have lost hope in agriculture and food production and they never want us to get engaged in land husbandry anymore
- ❑ Our parents face strong pressure from Agriculture and forest sector of the government, in the name of alternate energy, to use our little lands for cultivation of jethropa (oil seed plants), mono crops and other commercial crops which deprive us of our access to our own produce. (the market and its consumption is controlled and decided by someone else)
- ❑ Due to recurrent crop failures many of our friends and contemporaries have moved along with their families in search of odd errands. This makes them vulnerable to many more child rights violations in various forms. (for example. Starving, increasing sickness, drop out from school to supplement family income, subjected to sexual abuse, no physical protection, etc.)

We do not see any more draught animals or cattle in our villages which gave us substantial enjoyment and food supplement.





### OUR CHARTER:

We, Children, recognise impact of climate crisis is beyond the boundaries of geographical country line and any excess emission of harmful gases will create its impacts on the global community and global children and their future. With this in the perspective we as children also realise that there is a great deal that we could contribute to change the scenario by not only blaming the governments and external community. No doubt there need to be strong and conducive policies at every level backed by strong will taking into consideration of our view. As a result of the above process we place our charter.

- ⊕ Avoid over exploitation of our National resources by vested interests of developed nations and not instituting effective mechanisms for pay back of debts which aggravate poverty and pose a great threat to our food security
- ⊕ Assure to address equity issues related to our basic and ecological rights as stipulated in UNCRC, which We children from marginalised sections (local/regional/National/Internationally)are experiences as against the children of developed economy/countries
- ⊕ Provide/create adequate space to express/raise our voices from our experience, perceptions. Recognise and Include “Children Led Ecological Rights Clubs” (may be this is formed in different names in various States/countries) as part of the policy formulation processes at local/State/National and International forums including UNFCC
- ⊕ In the domestic front equity issues should be addressed and assured from the “have-nots” perspectives - the great 70% living in poverty stricken fragile eco systems and food security
- ⊕ Provide adequate space for awareness on the root causes of climate crisis and its impact on our future and the very existence of ecological child rights should be given to our fellow
- ⊕ Protect our food security and sovereignty
- ⊕ Introduce systematic CRR (climatic Risk Reduction) practices as part of our regular learning
- ⊕ We call for a Child Focused State/National Action Plan on Climate Change that will be arrived at after a wide consultation of children and be sanctioned by State Assembly/ parliament.



### OUR BELIEFS:

*"The earth provides enough for everyone's need for not for anybody's greed"*

We have rights as children for survival, protection, to be heard and to enjoy ecology within the national and International framework.

Our demand is that **our voices should be heard at all policy debates on climate crisis and given special space in the policy formulation processes.**

We feel "WE CHILDREN" form 1/3 of the global population and eagerly awaiting a prosperous eco friendly future.

- ☉ Hence **our voices cannot be sidelined. Our demand is not optional but our basic right.** We feel our concern should go beyond the National boundaries as Voice of the Global Children.
- ☉ The decisions we make today will have a significant impact on our lives. We will live the consequences. We will breathe air and drink the water you leave for us. As children and future citizens of this earth, we need to be given a greater voice on climate change issues from the Rights perspective as spelled out in the "Ecological Child Rights". We use this platform to make our voice for climate justice heard at all levels and from which we can express our demands.
- ☉ We, Children have considerable strengths that are a significant resource for families, communities and organisations. The value of our knowledge, creativity, energy, enthusiasm, and social networks should be recognised and encouraged.
- ☉ We assure and want to work closely with Regional/National and International governments and adults to contribute ideas and design policies that will affect our lives, now and into the future. We would like to move forward with a multi-generational, multidisciplinary vision.

### Our next plans

- ✂ Initiate a forum to reiterate climate justice for children at the national level
- ✂ Children working groups to set up hands on experience on low carbon, mitigation and adaptation process including advocacy
- ✂ These working groups, apart from doing the above, will act as pressure groups at the local/regional and National levels through appropriate campaigning and advocacy
- ✂ Formally register our network, with representation across the states, legally to gain full participation and representation eligibility at various forums to make our voice heard.





## Society for Peoples Education and Economic Change

### **Vision:**

**Strengthen human concern in civil society at large and to address issues that hinder growth process of the vulnerable, besides strengthening grass root democracy towards promoting sustainable development.**

### **Mission:**

**Releasing human potentials of weaker sections in rural Tamil Nadu.**

### **Objectives**

**To partner the developmental efforts of weaker and vulnerable sections towards wholistic improvement of their very being in the society.**

**To facilitate self actualisation among agrilaborers, small and marginal farmers, dalit women and children in general through partnership, in addition to federating them towards building grass roots organisations and interest groups.**



This publication is part of the larger engagement of partners of Christian Aid in India on the Climate Change policy discourse



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