



**ASSOCIATION FOR INTEGRATED RURAL
DEVELOPMENT (AIRD)**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2022-23**

1. RAMANATHAPURAM, TAMIL NADU

1.1 BACKGROUND - ABOUT THE DISTRICT:

Ramanathapuram District is an administrative district of Tamil Nadu state in Southern India. The city of Ramanathapuram is the District headquarters. Ramanathapuram District has an area of 4,123 Sq.kms. It is bound by Sivaganga District in the North, by Pudukkottai District in the North-East, by the Palk Strait in the East, by the Gulf of Mannar in the South, by Thoothukudi District in the West, and by Virudhunagar District on the North-West. The district contains the Pamban Bridge, an east-west chain of low islands and shallow coral reefs that extend between India and the island nation of Sri Lanka, and separate the Palk Strait from the Gulf of Mannar.

The district is divided into Two Revenue Divisions, Nine Revenue Taluks with Ramanathapuram town as its headquarters. It has Four Municipalities, Seven Town panchayats and 400 Revenue villages. Rural Development Programmes of the government are implemented through 11 Administrative Blocks (Panchayat unions) and 429 village administrative bodies (Panchayats) with 2362 hamlets.

It has One Govt. Medical College Hospital, 11 Govt. Hospitals, 54 Primary Health Centres, 267 Sub-Health Centres, 1042 Primary Schools, 217 Middle Schools, 112 High Schools, 143 Hr. Sec. Schools, 3 Govt. I.T. Is, 6 Teacher Training Schools (Private), 8 B.Ed. Colleges, 3 Self-Financing College of Education, 1 Govt. Eng. College, 6 Govt. College of Arts & Science (Co-ed), 7 Self-Financing Arts & Science Colleges, 1 Govt. College of Arts & Science (Women). 1 Govt. Music School, 1 Dist. Institute of Education & Training etc.,

The entire district covers an area of 4,123 Sq.kms. The national and state highways together cover a length of 389 kms in the district. Rameswaram a coastal town is a legendary pilgrim center for Hindus.

“The Waterless Forest” as widely known Ramanathapuram district lies in the southeast coastal district of Tamilnadu, India. This goes to say that the district is drought-prone for the greatest part of the year. The nature of the land is mostly flat and sandy. Due to the lack of irrigation, agriculture depends only on rainwater, which is very low and scarce. The three major reservoirs too suffer scarcity of water almost throughout the year. Palmyrah trees which thrive in this climatic condition are the only species found abundantly in this district. In recent days “Karu Odoi” (Prosopis juliflora) tree variety brought to meet the fuel needs of the rural people is encroaching on most of the areas and adding to the condition still further.

1.2.DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE DISTRICT

Ramanathapuram is one of the districts of Tamil Nadu in India, Ramanathapuram District population in 2023 is 1,570,132 (estimated) out of which 791,952 are males and 778,180 are Females.

As per the 2011 census of India, Ramanathapuram District has a population of 1,353,445 in 2011 out of which 682,658 are male and 670,787 are female.

Literate people are 978,946 out of 536,487 are male and 442,459 are female.

People living in Ramanathapuram District depend on multiple skills, total workers are 602,977 out of which men are 392,751 and women are 210,226.

A total of 149,959 Cultivators are dependent on agriculture farming out of 90,038 are cultivated by men and 59,921 are women.

103,592 people work in agricultural land as labourers, men are 56,539 and 47,053 are women.

According to the 2011 census, the Ramanathapuram District sex ratio is 983 females per 1000 males, much above the national average of 930. A total of 140,644 were under the age of six, constituting 96,420 males and 44,224 females. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes accounted for 18.4% and .01% of the population respectively.

The average literacy rate in Ramanathapuram district as per the census 2011 is 89.24 % of which males and females are 93.58 % and 84.77 % literates respectively, compared to the national average of 73% in 2011 while the National Statistical Commission surveyed literacy to be 77.7% in 2017–18.

The district had a total of 323,905 households. There were a total of 602,977 workers, comprising 173,767 cultivators, 60,874 main agricultural labourers, 25,228 in household industries, 343,108 other workers, 116,827 marginal workers, 15,362 marginal cultivators, 48,476 marginal agricultural labourers, 7,994 marginal workers in household industries and 15,298 other marginal workers.

Chettiar, Reddiar, Nayakkar, Thevar, Nadar, Meenavar, Yadavar, Pallar, Paraiyar and Chakilliyar are from the major caste groups in the district. Of these 77.39% are Hindus, 6.73% are Christians and 15.37% are Muslims by religion.

The main occupations are Fishing, Agriculture, Palmyrah Tapping, Petty trades and business. The traditional land tenure system in the villages has led a large number of people to marginal and landless labourers. About 80% of the land holding is with 5% of the rich in rural areas. Besides, this district does not have any big job-oriented industries. Among the existing 12 small-level factories, three are more or less

paralyzed. Employment opportunity, on the whole, is very low. This tends to migrate the people to other parts of the country as well as abroad which adds up to other health-related issues like Tuberculosis, Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV etc.,

1.3. ABOUT THE ORGANISATION AND THE COMMUNITIES

AIRD was founded in the year 1991 to improve the conditions of Palmyra workers and other excluded and vulnerable communities in Ramanathapuram district. Keeping its mission, AIRD has been instrumental in capacitating and organising them to access mainstream services. Over the years, AIRD has been successful in forming and equipping the Ramanathapuram District Palmyra Workers' Federation to function independently as a registered body to protect their rights and work for their development.

AIRD subsequently commenced work with Rural Artisans through a Network intervention programme in 1996 called NEERA (Network for Education and Empowerment of Rural Artisans) and reached out to the communities in 30 Panchayats of Ramanathapuram and Thoothukudi Districts. This initiative entailed working through women's groups as a strategy in reaching the goal of the overall programme, which was to promote self-help through a community organisation process, equip the communities with awareness generation and capacity building, and enable the community to create access to resources by linking with mainstream players. Through the efforts made, we got a programme through a NEERA Network, focused on four major components namely: Access to Primary Health Care, Increasing Income Generation Options, and Greater Participation of Community in Local Governance and strengthening of Federation to enhance Community Competency.

This NEERA initiative enabled AIRD to address many of the community issues and equip the communities to be partners in development as opposed to treating them as mere recipients of project benefits. This has enabled the communities to sustain the efforts to date.

AIRD implemented a Community-Based Care and Support programme for HIV/AIDS in the district. This was an alliance of 22 NGOs in Tamilnadu supported by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, UK.

AIRD implemented the CRL (Climate change responses, Risk reduction and Livelihood promotion) programme in Ramanathapuram district with 12 NGO partners from 2012 to 2014. The programme focused on sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, micro insurance, microfinance and social enterprises.

Besides, the organisation has also implemented a Targeted Intervention for Female Sex Workers (TI FSW) program from 2008 till 2021 with the support of the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), New Delhi through Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society (TANSACS), Chennai. The core objective of this program is to identify Female Sex Workers, ensure safer sex practices through the use of condoms, increase their health-seeking behaviour through periodical health check-ups, especially for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), take continuous treatment and motivate the partners through them for treatment had been ensured with most of the people identified.

Subsequently, AIRD went through difficult circumstances due to various internal and external anomalies beyond its control effective in 2014. This included the changing donor priorities and their perceptions about India and particularly Tamil Nadu.

Also, there had been an effort to restructure the board with the view to strengthen its competence both in terms of coping with emerging demands and skill sets.

As a result, AIRD is on to a new phase of its development efforts. This also means that the organisation had to reconsider its mandate and programmes. As a result, AIRD has the TANSACS program as its anchor initiative and is gradually working on a Farmers initiative, besides some community-based micro-enterprises and mobilising CSR Funds for implementing small to big events, projects, programmes in the field benefiting the community we work with at large in health and development aspects were thought of and are likely to be grounded during the ensuing year 2023-24.

2 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE OF AIRD DURING 2022-23

2.1 THE WOMEN'S EDUCATION PROJECT

The Women's Education Project implemented by AIRD and supported financially by Women's Education Project (WEP), New York, USA aims at ensuring Women's Education and Career Guidance for deprived and mainly rural and sub-urban women students through Madurai Academy in Madurai was started in April 2021 and the Ramnad Academy in Ramanathapuram started in December 2021 and continued for the second year during the year 2022-23 since it was successfully implemented during the year 2021-22.

The Following are the activities carried out through WEP.

2.1.1 Skills Certificate

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Communication Skills | - | Spoken English-Basic Level |
| 2. Computer Literacy | - | Basic Tally and Advanced Tally |
| 3. Career Skills | | |

- Square Root and Analytical Reasoning by Ms.Vasuki. 49 Students participated.
- Tamil Language and Literature by Mr.Murali. 26 Students participated
- Constitutional Rights by Mr.Murali. 35 Students participated
- Aptitude Class on Directions by Ms.Vasuki. 93 Students participated

2.2.1 STUDY SKILLS WORKSHOPS

A series of Study Skill Workshops were conducted by Dr.Jesu Vimala in online mode.

- Learning in English Medium. 41 students participated
- Understanding the Objectives of Learning. 45 students participated
- Listening & Note Taking. 45 students participated
- Methods to reading Comprehension. 41 students participated
- Questioning and Communication. 47 students participated
- Using Library & References. 46 students participated
- Academic Writing. 36 students participated
- Vocabulary and learning the Academic Language. 40 students participated

2.3.1 FOUNDATION CERTIFICATE

1. My Mind, Body & Spirit

No of Participants: 40 members

Facilitator: Dr. Suresh Kumar Murugesan H O D - P G Dept. of Psychology, The American College, Madurai and Team.

2. Gender, Culture & Society

No of Participants: 43 members

Facilitator: Mr.Ariaravelan, Development Professional and Team, Madurai.

3. My Leadership Spark

No of Participants: 36 members

Facilitators: Mr. Depan Mesack, M.Sc., and Mr. Daniel MA, MSc, Assistant Professors, American College and Student Interns.

4. My Rights

No of Participants: 38 members

Facilitators: Dinesh Kumar P Nair, B.Sc., LLB (Constitutional Law), Advocate, Madras High Court of Judicature. MS. Sumitha, Advocate, Madurai District Court

2.4.1 EXPLORATION CERTIFICATE

1. Village Visit to Parampupatti, Chinna Ulagani, Periya Ulagani, Kombadi. The objective of the visit was to document traditional Vaidya methods, to document

traditional Agriculture methods and to interview Village parents regarding their children's Education. 31 students and 2 staff participated.

2. A workshop on Mobile Photography and Filmmaking was conducted by Mr.Amuthan, Filmmaker. 30 Students participated

3. A Follow-up workshop on "Mobile Film Making" was conducted by Mr.Amuthan, Filmmaker. 30 Students participated

2.5.1 RIPPLE EFFECT CERTIFICATE

Ripple Effect - The change maker program was conducted by selecting seven students from Madurai Academy and five students from Ramnad Academy. The program was facilitated by Ms. Magdelene and Ms. Yamuna.

2.6.1 SPECIALISED STUDY CERTIFICATE – Karate and Yoga

2.7.1 MEETINGS - Student Meetings, Book Club Meetings, and Parents Meeting

2.8.1 RAMNAD ACADEMY

1. RESIDENTIAL TRAININGS:

- **My Mind and Body and Spirit**” Resource Person : Dr .Suresh Kumar Murugesan, Ph.D, HoD ,PG Dept of Psychology, The American College, Madurai.
 - **Gender, Culture, and Society.** Resource person: Mr.K.Ariaravelan, Curriculum Designer- Life Skills Education
 - **My Leadership Spark. Resource person:** Mr. Depan Mesack, M.Sc., and Mr. Daniel MA, MSc, Assistant Professors, American College and Student Interns.
 - **My Rights.** Resource person: Adv. Mr.Dinesh Kumar P. Nair, B.Sc., LLB.(Constitutional Law) Advocate, Madras High Court of Judicature, Adv. Ms.SUMITHA, Advocate, Madurai District Court, Madurai.
2. **Programme on “Ripple Effect And Change Maker”** Resource person: Ms.Maggi and Ms. Yamuna
 3. **Online Spoken English Classes** Resource person: Prof. Galina Thomas, Asst.Professor, Lady Doak College, Madurai
 4. **Aird-Wep- Karate Classes for Academy Students** Karate Master: Mrs.Kowsalya (Junior Karate Master). 15 students
 5. **Goal Setting Form And Club Meeting:** Chat GPT App - Google advance
 6. **Field Trip** – visited ICAR-CMFRI Mandapam Regional Centre, Maraikayarpatinam

AIRD, with the goodwill it has gained from the community and Donors, strives to serve the community with a holistic approach.

The following major activities were carried out during the year for the communities with their active participation:-

2 SHGS PROMOTED BY AIRD

Currently the number of SHGs functioning in the operational area containing Ramanathapuram, Thirupullani, Mandapam and Kadaladi Blocks of Ramanathapuram district is only 87 during the Reporting year 2022-23 as against 200+ in the previous years as most of the SHGs have been dissolved and joined with Panchayat Level Federations initiated by Mahalir Thittam (MATHI) of Govt. of Tamil Nadu which extends Loan facility through Banks.

Further, the AIRD-formed SHGs themselves detached from AIRD as individuals or as the SHGs as Groups are provided with the required amount of Loans by the Private Banks or by Private Finance Companies collecting Aadhaar Nos. and the Photocopy of the Aadhaar Card as a mandatory document required for the issue of the loan under Micro-Finance Scheme with the interest above 12% interest.

There is a lack of opportunity and non-availability of Bank finances to mobilize credit facilities for the members of SHGs to meet their large and emergency financial needs of SHG members.

The no. of SHGs are diminishing than before from 152 to 87 in this reporting year as they had easy access to credit facilities through Mahalir Thittam at Banks like HDFC, PACS, TGB, and IOB, and Financial institutions such as Asirrvad, Grama Vidiyal, Annanporna, L&T etc., which go to the door steps of SHG members, reach a large number of rural areas to meet out their financial needs equal to and more than that at an interest rate of 12 to 24% p.a, to repay it in 12 to 24 monthly instalments.

FUTURE PLANS

AIRD desires to widen its interventions during the coming years with a strengthened community base that enables the community to shift towards collective functioning. The focus areas would be the promotion of Climate Change Mitigation initiatives, Food Security and livelihood-adopting business through entrepreneurial initiatives and Microfinancing.

AIRD in this process would strive to work with corporate institutions by mobilizing CSR Funds and with women, farmers, children and youth.

In addition, the organization will also make attempts to create sustainable community structures with suitable mainstream linkages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We, the Office bearers, General body members and the Staff Team of AIRD, do sincerely acknowledge with thanks the contribution, support and direction extended by all the Managing Committee members, Ms Zoe Timms of Women's Education Project (WEP), New York, USA to run Academies in Madurai and Ramnad for Women's Education and their development through empowerment and career guidance, and all the well-wishers of AIRD towards realizing its spontaneous and exuberant developmental service to the poor, needy and deserving men and women folk in our area of operation.

Thank You!